六畳の侵略者!?

健速
Takehaya

22

Rokujouma no Shinryakusha!? - Volume 22

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22

六畳間の侵略者!? 22
～黄金の姫と青き騎士～
二千年の時を越え、
再び“パルドムシーハ領”へ！

三人が動物に!?
「わ…わふ」
「に…にゃあー」
「みゃお♪みゃおう♪」

「苦労をかけましたね、パルドムシーハ。
少し白髪が増えましたか？」
「おっ、お父様あっ!?」
「やはり
女の子は恋をすると
変わるのだな」

Whereabouts of the Meteor

Part 1

Saturday, November 20

The planet Alaia was the sixth planet from the sun in the Forthorthe solar system. It was originally a barren planet without life, but as the Holy Forthorthe Galactic Empire entered the space age, it was terraformed, and now allowed for people to live on it.

However, as Alaia was the first planet to be terraformed, many parts of it were made very simple. In particular the ecosystem, and there are were few types of flora and fauna on the planet. Only the bare minimum was brought to the planet, such as plants to create breathable air, farm products to support the residents and scenery to calm the mind.

As a result, Alaia's environment looked faintly similar to what one would imagine the countryside to look like. Though flora and fauna that originally weren't present continued to grow as people came and went due to interplanetary travels, it was still very simple. It would most likely take over another 1,000 years before it became a true, complete ecosystem. However, some people showed up that would be ever so slightly delaying that completion. They appeared on the sky as a blue meteor.

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaaa, Nooooooooooooo!”

The meteor screamed as it came into contact with the ground and tore up its surroundings for dozens of meters before finally stopping. While the destruction wasn't that widespread, it would likely take a few years for nature to recover.

Once stopped, the meteor in question lost its blue glow, and its true nature was revealed. The meteor was in reality a boy and two girls.

“Ow ow ow, I-I thought I would die...”

”Koutarou, let up a little. I really will die”

“Ah, sorry”

“There's no need for apologies. You've done a good job”

The meteor was actually Koutarou, Theia and Yurika. During a battle in space they had been caught by gravity and entered the atmosphere. It was a very dangerous situation, but they somehow managed to descend to the surface.

“Are you okay?”

”Yes, you protected me after. How about you?”

“I'm fine too. I'm not hurt...Though it doesn't look like I can say the same about the armor”

“Fufu, as long as you are safe. The armor can be replaced”

”P-Please whorry abouht me too~”

Koutarou and Theia smiled at each other and swiftly stood up to pull out Yurika whose face was buried in the ground. Fortunately, none of the three had any major injuries, with the largest one being Yurika's nose being grazed. They had avoided any injuries that would prevent them from taking further action.

“... Uhhh~... that was scary... I thought we would die...”

“We're fine now, so calm down, okay?”

”That's a lie. Even if you say that we're fine, I won't believe you anymore!”

”Okay, okay, I get it, just turn this way for a moment. Your face is a mess”

”Okay”

If anything, Yurika's mental state was a bigger problem, but as Koutarou was wiping her face, she gradually returned to normal.

“... But still... to think we'd be okay after falling all this way...”

While waiting for Koutarou to finish wiping Yurika's face, Theia blocked the sunlight as she looked up at the sky. In response to her voice, Yurika turned

her eyes to Theia's direction.

“Are there a lot of hellish places like that in Forthorthe?”

“Like I said, it's the upper layer of the atmosphere. Most planets with people on them have one”

“Eeeeehhh!? You're kidding!! If they're all like that, wouldn't spaceships just break apart!?”

”They're made sturdy to avoid that”

”Really?”

”Strictly speaking, the hull isn't made that sturdy. It's being protected by a distortion field after all. Moreover, as they fly controlling inertia and gravity the re-entry speed is slower, and there's not as much heat”

“See~!! I'm sure that it only happens here!!”

“Theia, don't make it any more complicated”

“Sorry. Fufufu”

Koutarou and the others had fallen from orbit without any spaceship. Normally, they would burn up like any other shooting star. The fact that they had escaped with minor scratches and burns was not just because of them combining their powers, but also due to a great deal of luck. It was a situation so dangerous Yurika would prefer to think that is something unique to the planet of Alaia.

“However, it will be more dangerous from here on out”

Theia waited for Koutarou to finish wiping off Yurika's face before dropping her smile and explaining the situation to the two with a serious expression and tone of voice. As a result, Yurika's and Koutarou's expressions were dyed with tension.

“Is there still something else?”

“The enemy will be coming. The imperial army will surely know we've landed in this area. If we waste too much time, we'll be surrounded before we know it”

“Eeeeehhh!?”

“Don't be so loud. What will you do if the enemy hears you”

“S-Sorry...”

“Alright, the two of you, follow me”

While they had safely gotten onto the surface, the danger was not over yet. They would need to leave before the imperial army sent pursuers after them.

Part 2

In the Forthorthe solar system, there are another seven planets, excluding the main planet of Forthorthe. And those seven planets were individually managed by one of the seven royal families.They were territories under their direct control. In other words, the royal families of the Holy Forthorthe Galactic Empire each held territories on the planet of Forthorthe, and a planet of their. Being more specific, the royal families had other planets in other systems, but those circumstances will be omitted for now.

As one could tell from how strong the support for Elfaria is on the planet of Alaia, this planet is under direct control of the Mastir family. Because of that, Theia had a lot of knowledge in regards to this planet. That knowledge included information such as where they could conceal themselves.

“Let's hide here for a while”

“Shouldn't we be trying to group up with Kiriha-san and the others right away?”

“We've only just arrived here, so the imperial army will be gathering nearby. It's dangerous to move around right now”

While they didn't know who for certain, someone in Forthorthe's imperial army should have been observing this area. They would of course send out troops to capture anyone entering the planet illegally. As a result, the guard around the area would be tight for a while. But as time passed, the army would expand their search radius assuming that Theia and the others moved, leaving the guard around the area looser. They would be safer by

not moving until then.

However, Theia still felt anxiety.

If that person reports in, there's a chance the guard will never ease up... but if I keep thinking about that, nothing will come from it...

If the pilot that had been saved reported to his superiors about Theia, then a large amount of forces would be gathered in the region. If that happened, they would be in an extremely dangerous situation, but they wouldn't be able to move right away regardless. Besides, Theia didn't regret saving the pilot. That's why she would think about it when the time came.

“So Theia, what kind of place is this?”

Koutarou twisted his head and looked around. Theia had taken the two to a building hidden half underground so that it blended in with the forest. Part of the building was collapsing, moreover it was covered in moss and ivy, showing that it hadn't been used for many years. As a result, it was impossible to tell what kind of building it was just by looking at it.

“This was a building used in the first stage of development for this planet. It was a forward base for the afforestation project. But as you can tell, the afforestation was a success, and the building fell out of use. After that, it appears to have been used as a hiding place for anti-government forces, but as development advanced they moved to a different location”

“So an afforestation base and a bandit hut, huh... so this is a place with a lot of history”

“That's why we have data on it”

As the Mastir family were in charge of the terraforming, they had the most information about the region. Even more than the imperial army that came later. Theia used that information to pick up a couple of hiding places, and chose to hide in a place the military had no information on.

“Then that means we're safe for a while!? We can rest right!?”

“That's right”

“... Pheeew.... thank god...”

Yurika sat down on a large block. As she had remained tense ever since

the atmospheric re-entry, she bent over forwards in an exhausted fashion. It didn't look like she'd be able to stand up again for a while.

“You can rest easy. They won't find this place right away”

The building was hidden by the surrounding forest and melted in with the environment. The building was half underground and covered in moss and ivy, camouflaging it. Moreover, it wasn't on the army's map. Unless they fell for a series of misfortunes, they wouldn't be found right away.

Part 3

Koutarou and the others decided to take a meal as they were resting. That said, their menu was a simple one. As it was food pulled from the survival kits from Koutarou's armor and the remains of Star Purple it was just high calorie conserved food and coffee.

“Thank you for the foo~d!

“Thanks for the food!”

“Thank you for the food”

However, Koutarou and the others didn't have any complaints about the menu and they silently carried the food to their mouths. They knew what time it was, and their stomachs were empty. Instead, Koutarou was thinking about something else.

“But still... Theia, your eating manners have become completely Japanese”

Koutarou was thinking of how Theia's manners had changed. When Koutarou had been in the past Forthorthe, he learned the difference. When he returned to Japan, he couldn't help but feel Theia's Japanese manners funny.

“... That might be true. I spent a long time there after all”

Having had that pointed out to her, Theia found it funny as well and smiled. Theia was now aware of her change. Having been able to see parts of it with her own eyes, her conviction grew stronger.

“Just make sure your political maneuvers don't become Japanese style as well”

“I know. In fact, I'm more worried about you”

“Me? Why?”

Having had the topic turned on him all of a sudden, Koutarou's eyes opened wide in surprise. As if directing an orchestra, Theia pointed her finger at Koutarou and stared at him.

“If you act too much like it, they'll find out that you're the Blue Knight”

She wanted to keep a secret but reveal it at the same time. Those two feelings were constantly struggling within Theia's mind. Hearing her words, Koutarou broke into a smile again.

“Hearing you say that is funny”

“Why?”

“You're the one who put me through such hard training”

“Fufufu, that's true”

The one that beat the manners and heart of a knight into Koutarou was none other than Theia herself. So having her tell him not to show it was strange. That fact matched with the struggling feelings within her, and she couldn't help but find it funny as well.

“We both have to work not to show the habits we've picked up”

“Yeah. Let's watch out”

As the two laughed together, the chat reached an end for now. And without anyone initiating it, their expressions turned more serious. The two, or rather, the three of them, weren't in a situation where they could just be focused on getting better along.

“So Theia, what do we do from now on? We'll of course group up with Elle and the others”

Grouping up with the others was their top priority. If they didn't, they wouldn't be able to protect Forthorthe. It was only natural that they would get more serious.

“Normally, I'd like to communicate first, but in this situation, that's practically suicide”

“We can't use radio or gravitational waves, since Elexis is involved, we can't use magic or spiritual energy either”

For communications, some form of wave would be required. But if any wave was broadcast, the imperial army would come knocking in large numbers.

“Since communications are no good, that of course means that a gate is out of the question”

“We'd probably get surrounded by unmanned aircrafts long before any gate is ready”

For similar reasons, a gate, like the one used to travel instantly between room 106 and the Blue Knight couldn't be set up.

As it would take at least an hour to setup a gate safe enough for people to travel through, the army would surely detect it and flood the area with unmanned aircrafts. As they were replaceable, they could be sent through swiftly gates without fear of failure. That's why chances were high they'd get surrounded by unmanned aircrafts long before they could use a gate.

The problem was the same with Yurika's teleportation, as it would bend space, the results would be the same.

“So we'll have to escape on our own. We'll set out at night”

If both communications and gates were unusable they couldn't rely on their allies to help. They would have to get out themselves. That was the conclusion Theia reached.

“Don't we have to hurry?”

Obviously, they'd want to group up with the others are quickly as possible. So Koutarou believed it would be better to wait a few hours so that the guard around the area would loosen up a little and then leave. However, Theia wanted to wait until night, which confused him.

“I would love to, but there's probably satellites and unmanned aircrafts above us. It would be difficult to escape their watch during the day”

Theia essentially felt the same way as Koutarou, but had her reason for not

wanting to rush it. That reason was the surveillance network that was surely set up above them. Because of that, it would dangerous to move when normal optical observation was possible.

“So it would be better at night when the cameras can't see, huh”

“Yes... however, even then there's still a risk”

“What kind of risk?”

“We can still be seen by infrared cameras”

“Wouldn't the forest and animals let out heat as well?”

“This is an artificial forest, so there's not many large animals. There's a chance they could just check out all the larger heat sources”

“So we'd need to go deep into the forest”

“That's right”

At night, optical cameras wouldn't work, but infrared cameras or heat sensors could still be used. That said, animals normally lived in the forest, so one wouldn't get found right away. But the circumstances for the forests of Alaia was different. As the forest had been created artificially, the number of animals were far less than in a natural forest. Especially the larger creatures. Which meant that chances were that they'd be found in this forest than in a natural one.

The safest way to avoid detection was to move along regions where trees grew in abundance. The infrared cameras and heat sensors wouldn't be able to see through obstacles.

“However, the army knows that as well, so there will be probably be a lot of personnel and unmanned aircrafts stationed in the deep parts of the forest”

“... I see... that's rather troublesome...”

Koutarou agreed with Theia's clear explanation and racked his brain over what to do. Rather than going out without a plan, it'd be best to have at least one insurance in place.

“Yurika”

So the first insurance that popped into Koutarou's mind was Yurika.

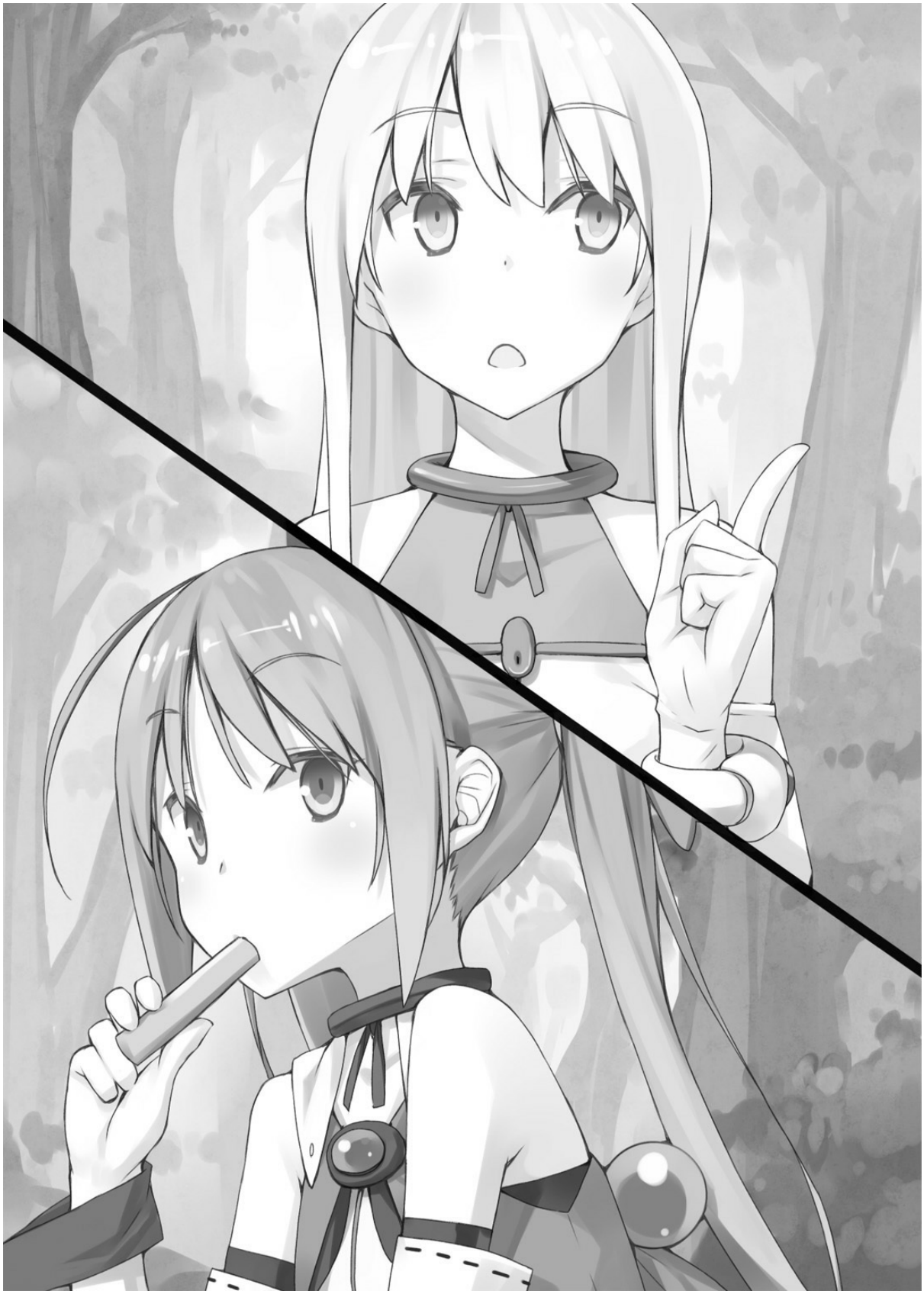
“Hueh?”

Having suddenly been called, Yurika had a confused expression as she looked up with her mouth full of food. Having been so focused on food, she hadn't listened to Koutarou's and Theia's conversation at all.

“Can't you use your magic to hide our temperature?”

“It's not like I can't, but for how long?”

While she wasn't following the overall discussion, she had a spell in mind to hide temperatures. It was a spell she had been thought as it was often used during stealth missions.



“Theia, how far away are we from our destination?”

“Since we're walking... it'll probably take three four days”

Koutarou's armor and Signaltin, and Theia's Combat Dress had practically used up all of their energy. Moreover, since Theia had cut Star Purple loose during re-entry, only the basic equipment of the actual dress remained. As a result, they couldn't do something that required a lot of energy or relied on too much equipment. If they could, then Yurika probably wouldn't have had to land on her face. Because of that, they would have to walk.

For the time being, Koutarou and the others would like to get to somewhere where the Elfaria faction had a lot of power. The city on the horizon was 100 kilometers away. Even if they moved at full speed, it would take two days at best to reach, if they wanted to preserve some stamina in case of an emergency it would take three to four days.

“So during the middle of the night. Yurika, can you do it?”

“If it's just me I can do it, but with the three of us it would be hard”

As the spell to hide temperature was an intermediate class spell it wasn't suited to be used over a long period of time. Yurika had been born with a lot of magical power, but it was far from easy to hide the temperature of three people for several hours.

“Besides, since I need to conceal my magical power so Darkness Rainbow find us, I don't think I could last more than two hours with three of us...”

Even if they hid their temperature with magic, Darkness Rainbow could detect the traces of magical power used for the spell. Which meant that Yurika would also need to cast a spell to conceal that, roughly draining her of twice as much energy. In other words, she'd need to conceal the temperature of three people and conceal the magical power, which doubled her use, so a total of six times the magical power of what it would normally take for just her. As a result, something that Yurika could use on herself and last for half a day would at best last for two hours with six times the energy drain.

“If we can only move 2 hours a day, it would take ten days. We wouldn't be able to escape them”

Theia reached her conclusion after counting on her fingers. Another problem that made this situation more complicated was that they couldn't take too much time.

“I'm sorry... I just wish I was an amazing magical girl...”

Yurika still wasn't following the discussion all that well, as she dropped her shoulders apologetically. She could tell that the situation was serious from how Theia and Koutarou were behaving.

“How troublesome... I guess we'll have to go without magic”

”Yeah...”

“I'm sorry... I'm really...”

The discussion reached a standstill, but unexpectedly, Koutarou's flash of brilliance was what broke through the situation.

“That's right, Yurika, wait a minute!”

“Fueh?”

“We don't have to fully hide our temperatures! We just need it to look like it's not human, would that work, Yurika!?”

“That's what we could do! Good job, Koutarou!”

That was when Theia caught onto Koutarou's intention and showed a big smile. Yurika had said that she'd only last two hours by completely hiding their temperatures. That's the kind of measures that would be required to sneak into a place with a solid detection network without getting caught. However, that wasn't the case this time around, there was no need to completely conceal it, an incomplete form was fine as well. They only needed to be indistinguishable from the animals of the forest. That should reduce the required amount of magical power, and make it harder for Darkness Rainbow to sense them.

“What do you mean?”

Having only listened to the latter half of the discussion, Yurika tilted her head in confusion. Koutarou grabbed her shoulders and explained it simply so she could understand.

“During the night, the imperial army will be looking after our heat signatures at night. They'll probably use infrared cameras and heat sensors to gather information in the forest and filter out anything that wouldn't come from a human in order to locate us. Are you following me this far?”

“Yes, somehow”

”Alright, then I'm continuing... So what if we let out half the heat we normally do?”

”They would... filter us out?”

“That's right! We'll make the army think were just some dogs or cats walking about!”

”Ah!”

Yurika clapped her hands together as she finally understood what Koutarou meant. It was something even she could understand as long as she listened.

“If it's just half I think it will be okay. Though it might be best to take a rest every now and then just in case”

The amount of magical power drained to hide the temperature increased exponentially the closer the spell got to fully hiding it. That's why, allowing heat to leak through would reduce the amount of magical power needed by quite a bit. Letting half of it through meant that even a rather haphazardly cast spell would work. Being an elite, an arc wizard, Yurika should be able to last for half a day.

“Alright, then it's decided! We'll move out at night!”

”Yeah!”

”Okay!”

Thus, Koutarou and the others formed a plan of escape. They were currently isolated in a dangerous situation but there was still high chance for them to group up with the others. Thanks to that, the expressions and voices of the three had turned brighter.

Meanwhile, Elsewhere

Part 1

Saturday, November 20

For the people on board the O-hime, it really hurt as the imperial army detected just before their descent to the surface of Alaia. Because of that, the descent that was supposed to have been done in secrecy was imperfect, and as a result, after they entered the atmosphere and slowed down, they were attacked by the army.

“Emergency alert Ho-! We've detected four fighters approaching Ho-!”

”They're fighters that scrambled from a nearby base Ho-! The other nearby bases have probably launched fighters aswell, there will be more of them soon Ho-!”

”Everyone, grab onto something! I'll be driving a little roughly!”

As Kiriha said that, she set her engines to maximum thrust and twisted the control stick to the side. If they flew in a straight path, they'd be easy pickings for the fighters. In order to avoid that, they'd need to make evasive maneuvers.

“Change the Spiritual Energy Field to combat mode! Deploy Active Distortion Field! Active the interception system, start up the jamming! Help out too, Maki-chan Ho-!”

”Okay! Greater Mirage!”

As Kiriha was performing evasive maneuvers, various defensive measures were being activated. Spiritual energy and scientific barriers, jamming to get in the way of guidance systems for any missiles, and machine guns to shoot them down. Maki also used her illusionary spells to create a fake O-hime. With this many powers, the O-hime's defenses were solid. Even against

four fighters, they wouldn't go down right away.

“Sanae, I'll leave the bombardment to you!”

”Roger! Galaxy Sanae-chan Buster charged to 120%!”

”The name is different from before Ho”

“It's the same in my soul so it's fine!! Gooooooooooo!!”

Along with Sanae's yell, four beams were fired from O-hime. These were beams formed from a mix of the O-hime's spiritual energy generator and Sanae's own spiritual energy. Thanks to that, the beams could be bent by Sanae's will. The beams curved and flew towards the fighters behind the O-hime.

“W-What!?”

”Impossible!?”

This surprised the fighter pilots. The beams reflected off of something was one thing, but they had never heard of beams that curved on their own. Having been caught off guard, they followed their instincts and banked to the sides to avoid the beams.

“It's okay. I won't hit you yet♪”

Sanae hummed as she curved the beams to chase after the fighters. The attacks moved less like beams and more like missiles, despite that, the normal means of defense against missiles didn't work. Irritated by the beams chasing after them, the pilots decided to take action.

“Kiriha, it looks they're getting irritated and are shooting”

“I got it. Keep it up like that

“Got it!”

Each of the four fighters fired two missiles each. Though as they fired them while being chased by beams, three of the missiles flew off in unrelated directions. Out of all missiles, only five chased after O-hime. However, since Sanae had warned Kiriha beforehand, she didn't panic.

“Now then, I wonder what they're using to track us”

Kiriha operated her panels and fired off flares. At the same time, she reduced the output of the thrusters and turned to the side.

“So they were guided optically after all”

The missiles ignored the flares and continued chasing after O-hime. That made Kiriha conclude that the missiles were guided using optics. As they ignored the flares they weren't using thermal guidance. Moreover, jamming was in place and if they used spiritual energy, they would have a different reaction to Sanae's beams.

“Maki, can you make it look like the ship blew up?”

”Yes, I've done things like that before”

“Then do it grandly”

“Okay, leave it to me”

”Clan-dono—”

“I know what you want to say. Just leave it to me”

“Fufu, then I'm counting on you”

O-hime fled from the missiles for a while, but in the end it was unable to shake them off and got hit.

With a loud boom the missiles exploded upon impact and destroyed O-hime's frame. This caused the generator to detonate as well, creating a very big explosion so large it could be seen from far away.

“Sanae, how's it going over there?”

“It's going good. Looks like they think they got us”

“Good”

Of course, the O-hime that exploded was a fake. After using Clan's invention to make O-hime transparent, the illusionary O-hime that had been created as a defensive measure was made to explode.

“But we'll need to get out of here fast. They'll find out soon”

They still couldn't let their guard down. The device used to make O-hime

transparent was something Clan had made for herself, it wasn't built with this kind of large object in mind. That meant that the effect was temporary, and it would appear again after some time. Even if it didn't, the army would notice that there are no remains soon enough and send out pursuers again.

“Don't worry, let's hide over there for a while”

Kiriha's plan had taken that problem into account. With a confident smile she pointed at a large lake.

Part 2

Strictly speaking O-hime wasn't a spaceship, but additional equipment for the haniwas. It was made to make use of the combat data the haniwas had accumulated, and it was made to allow it to traverse any place that they themselves could go. So it could of course travel through space and air, but also underground and underwater. Of course, its combat capabilities were reduced as a result of this, and they'd want to avoid fighting a craft of the same size specialized for combat. This time, their opponents were four fighters, and even more were expected to arrive, so Kiriha had chosen to escape.

“How is it going?”

As O-hime stopped moving, Elfaria who had been in the residential section up until now poked her head into the cockpit. As expected, she couldn't sit still while Theia was missing.

“How are Yurika-chan and the others?”

Nana was also next to Elfaria. She was especially worried about Yurika. Her circumstances were the same as Elfaria, and she couldn't help but worry for her pupil and friend.

“For starters, we shook off our pursuers and escaped underwater. Sadly, we haven't heard anything from Theia-dono and the others”

The original plan was to lay low in a lake after descending to the surface disguised as a shard of ice. Even if the army arrived to investigate anything

they found strange, they would never imagine that the O-hime would be underwater. That should have allowed them to get in unnoticed.

While they had been detected just before their descent, the enemy still didn't that they would hide underwater. With her flexible thinking, Kiriha adapted to part of the original plan, using an illusion to fool the army and safely hiding at the bottom of the lake.

“I see... I just hope they are safe...”

Elfaria showed an expression that seemed to be a mix of both relief and disappointment. The others could sympathize with those feelings. Kiriha and the others all couldn't help but feel anxious by the fact that they couldn't contact the three.

“I just wish there was a way to confirm that all three of them are okay”

Nana looked up as she mumbled. Above her was just the ceiling, but her focus was on the lake past that, and the army beyond the lake.

“... If we use communications now, the army will find us right away”

Contacting the three wouldn't be that hard. As they knew the rough area of where Koutarou and the others had fallen, they could just use high powered radio or gravitational waves. The problem was that if they did, the army would find them. The problem at hand now was to figure out a way to communicate without being detected.

“Uhm, can I say something?”

Everyone racked their brains to come up with a solution to the problem, and after the cockpit had fallen silent for a moment, Harumi raised her hand and requested permission to speak. As she did, all eyes in the room naturally gathered on her. Normally, that would be enough to overwhelm Harumi a little, but they were in an emergency right now. Pushed forwards by her strong emotions, Harumi continued to speak.

“I can sense Satomi-kun's presence through Signaltin. I'm certain that he's safe”

Harumi was constantly connected to Signaltin through a faint flow of magical power. Because of that, she could naturally tell the state of Signaltin without having to do anything. Currently, Signaltin had used up a

lot of magical power during the re-entry, but was keeping up its defense as usual. That was proof that Koutarou was alright.

“Are you sure, Harumi-san!?”

“Yes, Your Majesty. Satomi-kun is safe, so the other two should be as well”

As there were no healing spells being cast, the remaining two shouldn't have any serious injuries either. As long as they weren't killed instantly, that is.

“I see... then we can rest easy for now”

Thanks to Harumi's report, Elfaria's expression eased up. Following that, the atmosphere in the cockpit eased up a little as well. While they might be powerful, they were still normal girls. Knowing that their friends were safe was a huge plus to their mood.

“Sakuraba-senpai, can't you use Satomi-kun's sword to talk to him?”

With the tension easing up, their minds began to work. Shizuka believed that they should be able to speak with Koutarou using Signaltin's magical power.

“In terms of if I can or can't, I can... but I feel like I shouldn't”

Harumi shook her head impatiently. If she could, she'd love nothing more than to speak with Koutarou. However, there was a reason for why she shouldn't.

“Why is that?”

”Shizuka, if the magical power flowing between Signaltin and here gets stronger it will reveal our positions to Darkness Rainbow. With that man involved, that possibility needs to be considered”

The man that Kiriha was referring to was Elexis. As the fighters they encountered in space were equipped with spiritual energy sensors, Elexis was most definitely involved. Which meant that chances were high that Darkness Rainbow that went missing with him were also involved.

“Aika-san, do you think Darkness Rainbow will appear above?”

“The leaders probably won't, but I think some that can detect magical power

might appear”

As the magical power flowing between Harumi and Signaltin was weak, that alone wouldn't get them detected. But if that flow increased to the point where communication was possible, they would most likely get found. The same went for radio and gravitational waves.

“Should I go?”

Radio, gravitational waves and magic were all no good. In that case, all that was left was spiritual energy. Sanae believed that her astral projecting herself to go look for the three would be the fastest way.

“No, let's keep that as our last resort. Your spiritual energy is too powerful”

However, Kiriha shook her head at Sanae's suggestion. As the enemy had gotten their hands on spiritual energy sensors, if Sanae were to fly around in her astral form, there was a chance she would get detected.

“Then, what do we do, Kiriha!? We can't do anything like this!!”

“We'll start by moving away from this place underwater. We won't be able to do anything with the army so close”

Kiriha had chosen to descend by this lake because it was very large. If they moved underwater, they would be able to safely leave their landing point in secret. While she was also worried about Koutarou and the others, the first thing they had to do was to escape from the army.

Part 3

On Earth, the imperial army of Forthorthe had lost to Folsaria's group. That was not just due to equipment and fighting power, but also strategically.

Bandarion's aim for dispatching the soldiers to Earth was not just to capture Elfaria, but to have her retaliate, and get the soldiers killed in the process. That would drastically reduce Elfaria's support. However, in the end there had been no casualties on either side. That proved the ability and nobility of the Elfaria faction and instead helped to raise her reputation and increase

her support.

Of course, Bandarion tried to control the information regarding the entire event. But with the information being so noteworthy, it spread by word of mouth, and it was too late to get under control. Moreover, as freedom of speech was guaranteed in Forthorthe, there was a limit to how much the information shared between individuals could be controlled.

As a result, it was a complete victory for Elfaria in all meanings of the word, and Bandarion ended up being led by the nose. With this outcome, the prideful Bandarion decided to team up with Elexis. It wasn't hard to imagine that Bandarion was burning with rage deep inside. On top of that, having to pay respects to a youngster like Elexis was nothing short of pure humiliation.

That was just as Elexis had planned when he leaked the information, but he didn't know how Bandarion would react when he faced him. That was Elexis' biggest cause for concern when he had been called for a conference by Bandarion. At the same time it was also the reason for Elexis' nervousness.

“You've done well to come, Elexis-kun”

In contrast to Elexis' expectations, Bandarion welcomed him with a smile into a luxurious salon. Besides him was his aide, Granado as well. He also welcomed Elexis with a calm smile. Only Bandarion and Granado were present in the salon that would be used for the conference. Elexis figured that it was a sign that they trusted him, and that the conference would delve into complicated topics.

“I am greatly honored to have you personally welcome someone as inexperienced as me, Lord Bandarion”

Elexis bowed while still standing in the doorway. He didn't break his smile either, but on the inside he was extremely nervous. Bandarion's behavior here would greatly affect his future, so close attention would need to be paid to all things.

“I owe a debt to you. A debt for letting us know of the capabilities of the Elfaria faction right away”

“Hearing you say that makes it worth sharing the information with you”

Elexis laughed like a carefree and inexperienced young CEO, while

carefully observing Bandarion's words and actions.

It seems like he has far more frightening than I thought...

At this point, Elexis had a high evaluation of Bandarion. You could even say he feared him. If Bandarion was not a fool, he had probably seen through the intentions behind Elexis' information leak. That even with the information, he still lost, so he had no choice but to cooperate with Elexis, yet knowing that, Bandarion still had a confident attitude. That meant that Bandarion had a good control over his emotions, and was capable of calculating losses and gains in a cool-headed manner.

While it's going as planned, I doubt he'll let it continue like that... who knows what'll happen if I let my guard down...

Elexis was trying to team up with Bandarion for the sake of his own goals. However, upon actually meeting Bandarion, he felt like he would be the one ending up getting used if he didn't maneuver well enough. In order to keep that from happening, Elexis braced himself once more.

“If you stand there, we won't be able to come. Come this way, Granado's gone out of his way to prepare tea too”

“Okay... then excuse me”

Heeding Bandarion's words, Elexis headed towards the seat prepared for him. The salon's thick carpet was soft, and his foot sunk in with each step.

Now then, this is where it gets hard...

However, at the moment, Elexis didn't have the room to feel the softness of the carpet. Bandarion and Granado acting so friendly was just a superficial thing. In truth, it was more like he was standing before wild beasts with their jaws primed wide open. That's why Elexis focused all of his nerves so that he wouldn't miss the slightest reaction from either of them.

Part 4

While Elexis and Bandarion were having their top-level talks, the

subordinates of both sides were having a business conference. Even if the top's conference was going roughly, the meaning for both sides was great. They did stuff such as establishing simple information lines, deciding on how to respond in emergencies and dealing with information and supplies that should be shared.

And having mixed in with the subordinates who were negotiating was the magical girls of Darkness Rainbow who had their own mission to attend to. Thanks to magic, they were skilled at disguises and information gathering. They constantly changed their appearance with magic and easily infiltrated places that they normally wouldn't be able to enter, and stole a great deal of information about Bandarion's side. Moreover, they could also eavesdrop, hypnotize and directly read the mind. They got in the way of the information gathering that Bandarion's side was performing without being noticed while one-sidedly returned with a great deal of information. As expected, the unknown technology known as magic gave them an overwhelming advantage.

“So, how were Bandarion and Granado?”

Maya, who had been leading Darkness Rainbow in their information gathering welcomed Elexis who had just finished his conference with a smile. She had been on a mission where she had to put her life at stake, but that couldn't be felt at all from the way she was smiling. It was as if she had just gone out to play.

“Oh, they were quite scary people. I probably would have been devoured if I let my guard down for even a moment”

”They must be quite the people if they can make you say that”

Elexis on the other hand was acting the opposite of Maya. The moment he saw her face, the exhaustion and tension he had been hiding until then appeared on the surface. Even though he had just gone to speak to two people, Elexis felt like had just run through a battlefield. Of course, this was partially because of the sense of security he felt with just the two of them inside of the waiting room that had been assigned to him.

“I should have made a deal for equal cooperation but... I feel chills down my spine when I imagine if all of you hadn't been here. I am truly lucky”

The conference between Elexis and Bandarion had ended on a peaceful note. It had been decided that both sides would work together closely in the

future. He had also gotten conditions that were equal. That likely bolstered his reputation as a business man. However, Elexis wasn't being optimistic. The conference seeming peaceful, and conditions being equal was probably just on the surface. If he didn't make a move right away, he would likely end up in a horrible disadvantageous position. In that sense, having Darkness Rainbow with him was very reassuring. Not even Bandarion would have a response to magic. In fact, even now Elexis was being protected by it. So despite being inside of a building belonging to the Bandarion side, there was no fear of being eavesdropped on.

“You're putting them up on quite the pedestal”

”It's my honest impression. If you meet then, you'll understand”

”That's awfully timid. In the past you were planning on dealing with them on your own, weren't you?”

”Right now, I am really glad that never happened”

Elexis was serious, he wasn't complimenting or flattering them on purpose. Elexis seriously needed Maya and Darkness Rainbow in order to go up against Bandarion as equals. That's why Maya picked up that Bandarion must be terrifying from Elexis' appearance. And because of that, she had something to say to him.

“I wasn't quite sure before hearing your story... but, since there's no doubt I'll let you know now”

“What happened?”

Sensing the change in the air around Maya, Elexis' expression sharpened. It was the expression of the partner that Maya chose. Satisfied with that, she continued speaking.

“They're planning on wiping out the people of the Elfaria faction and take out everyone around them as well”

“What!?”

Elexis froze on the spot from surprise. He had thought of Bandarion and Granado as fearsome, but he didn't think they'd go that far.

“That possibility appeared upon seeing the data inside of the computer, and from the behavior of Bandarion's subordinates. And your impression of

Bandarion and Granado removed all doubt. There's most likely no doubts”

Maya's expression was stern. She hadn't expected them to go that far either. And upon hearing Elexis' impressions, Maya determined that they most likely wouldn't hesitate.

“What a foolish thing...”

”They don't have any aesthetics. Their actions are incoherent and off balance”

Elexis and Maya didn't hesitate to use twisted means for the sake of their goals. However, there was no meaning in doing that without restriction. As Elexis took action according to his beliefs to create his ideal society, he wanted to keep civilian casualties low. Maya wanted to let the people of Folsaria to return to Forthorthe with dignity, so she didn't want them to return to a barren wasteland.

“So in the end, they're the same as Tayuma...”

“They're a little different. If anything, they're ideologists, through and through. Though letting them be is equally dangerous”

People were necessary for an ideal society and a country to return to. Because of that, they couldn't accept the way Bandarion and Granado thought. To them, evil had its own way of blooming.

Father and Daughter

Part 1

Saturday, November 20

Fighters from nearby bases had scrambled and gathered around the area where O-hime had descended. Fortunately, the explosion had served as concealment as expected, and O-hime was able to escape into the nearby lake, and remain hidden. The army never would have imagined that a spaceship had fled into the water, and they assumed that it had exploded. Even if they realized that the explosion was an illusion, they wouldn't search the lake until quite a while later. By that time, O-hime would no longer be there. It would have escaped a long time ago.

“So Kiriha, what do we do now?”

Having used her powers to detect auras and serve as a radar for a while, Sanae lazily leaned into her seat. O-hime had safely escaped from any pursuers. Sanae could no longer sense their presence nearby. She could finally relax for a moment.

“I'd like to go look for Koutarou and the others, but we can't in this situation. We'll head to the Elfaria faction's base as planned”

Kiriha seemed to feel a little relief as well, as her expression eased up slightly. That was her first re-entry so it was only obvious.

“Is that really okay?”

“Yeah. Koutarou and the others won't be able to find us either. They're probably headed towards a base on their own”

“Then we can contact them”

”That's right”

In Kiriha's mind, the fastest way of finding Koutarou and the others was to head to the Elfaria faction's base as planned. As Koutarou and the others were far away, going to look for them directly or contacting them was dangerous. As the army was on high alert, they would respond immediately and surround them. As neither side could communicate with the other, they would need to follow the plan they decided on beforehand. As the bases were connected through a secret communications network, as long as both sides arrived, they could confirm each other's safety.

“In that case, it's my turn”

That was when Ruth who was sitting in the operator's seat joined the discussion. She was the most knowledgeable when it came to the Elfaria faction's bases. She was knowledgeable about this area, not only because it was Forthorthe, but for yet another reason.

“We're finally meeting with Ruthpapa”

“Yes. I just hope he's full of vigour”

They were headed for the largest base the Elfaria faction had on Alaia. The base is within the Pardomshiha family's territory. As this was the space age, they had received the enclave as a separate addition to the territory they already had on the planet of Forthorthe. Because of that, they were able to secretly construct a large-scale base. The commander of said base was none other than Ruth's father, Lord Pardomshiha. In other words, by heading towards the base, Ruth would reunite with her family.

“Hey, what kind of person is Ruthpapa?”

”Well... I think he's serious, just like me”

”So that's part of your genetics”

”Yes. But maybe because of his age, but he is also flexible. To the point where he can't be coaxed into something by Her Majesty”

Lord Pardomshiha continued the family's tradition of 2,000 years and was a typical Pardomshiha knight. Very loyal to the royal families, the strong and silent type, and capable in both literary and military arts. Excluding the Blue Knight, the Pardomshiha knights were the model images for knights. Even amongst them, he was an outstanding individual.

“... I hate him”

Elfaria who was listening in began pouting. It was a very childish expression that made one doubt that she was actually a mother.

The reason for the high praise that Lord Pardomshiha received was because he had excellent intellect and patience which allowed him to not be fooled by Elfaria. The only one capable of evading the verbal attacks of Elfaria, who was known as a vixen, while carefully looking for weak points to counterattack was Lord Pardomshiha. When troubled, turn to Pardomshiha had practically become a slogan.

“... In short, the empress trusts him so much that she has no problems with openly declaring that she hates him”

“That would be the case”

Kiriha let out a cheerful laugh. As did Clan who was next to her.

“This isn't a laughing matter! Geez...”

Elfaria was only able to declare that she hates Lord Pardomshiha because she trusted him. The feelings involved were probably similar to those towards an uncle. Agewise was the same. The relationship between the two was well known through the media, and was the cause for why they were so beloved.

Part 2

O-hime had travelled several dozen kilometers after entering the lake by the point of descent. From there, they ascended to the surface and proceeded another several dozen kilometers while being extra careful not to get detected by the imperial army. The Elfaria faction base was located in an area surrounded by high mountains and deep valleys. The base had been built underground and the entrance was concealed by making use of the complex valleys. It would be very difficult to find the base without very accurate information.

The inside of the base was similar to the Blue Knight and made use of a unique design of smooth curves. However, There were also parts where steel was left exposed. That was because the base had been built in a

hurry, and the parts where strength wouldn't be an issue were left as they were. In that sense, the atmosphere was different from the usual facilities the imperial army used.

“Your Majesty! I am so very glad you are safe!”

Confirming that Elfaria had gotten off O-hime, Lord Pardomshiha ran up to her at full speed. It was like a child running up to his mother, or perhaps a father running up to his daughter who had run away from home.

“I've caused you a lot of trouble, Pardomshiha. Did you get any more gray hairs?”

“Hahaha, a lot of things have happened here as well. I'm glad to see you haven't changed, actually, you seem more energetic than before?”

“A lot happened here too. I'll tell you the details at a later time”

Elfaria was so energetic because she had brought the Blue Knight with her to Forthorthe, life on Earth was more fun than she had expected, and for various other reasons as well. However, she couldn't reveal that here in public, and right now there were other things to be concerned with.

“Yes. From what I heard, Her Majesty Theiamillis is missing?”

“Let's start from there. Oops, before that”

Elfaria suddenly pulled the hand of the girl near her and forcibly pushed her in front of Lord Pardomshiha.

“Kyaaa!? Y-Your Majesty!?”

Elfaria had pulled out Ruth. Lord Pardomshiha and Ruth, father and daughter who had been separated for a long time were now facing one another.

“Let's start with doing what you have to. Both of you are too distracted right now to do anything else, are you not?”

Elfaria wanted the two to talk things out before they started on any complicated discussion. She had noticed that Ruth wanted to speak with her father but found herself unable to do so, and that Lord Pardomshiha couldn't speak with Ruth due to his position.

“Your methods are forcible as always... but I am grateful”

Both Lord Pardomshiha and Ruth bowed to Elfaria before facing one another again.

“Father, I am back”

“Long time no see, Ruth. Did you grow a bit taller?”

“Just a little bit”

Ruth and Lord Pardomshiha had an excellent relationship. That's why neither of them minded the time they had been apart and exchanged smiles like normal. In fact, it seemed like the time apart had made them even closer.

“Maybe it's because of that, because you've gotten a more mature expression. You're slowly but surely turning into an adult lady... I don't know whether I should feel lonely or happy”

Lord Pardomshiha watched his daughter with a dazzled glance. The atmosphere around her now was slightly different from what it had been since he last saw her some months ago. Ruth was maturing into a splendid woman, day by day. That's why he felt like his daughter had left him behind and was maturing on her own, while he was happy to see her growth, he wanted her to remain as his sweet young daughter.

“I'm still far away from being an adult lady”

While part of it was a doting parent, Ruth didn't feel bad about having her growth praised. She was embarrassed but she was still at an age she wanted to rely on her father. Ruth shook her head while blushing.

“Girls really do change when they fall in love”

Lord Pardomshiha crossed his arms and nodded repeatedly, seemingly full of understanding. Seeing her father like that sent Ruth into a fluster.

“F-Father!?”

Her face dyed beet red and she let out a panicked scream. At the same time she began worrying about the surrounding glances.

“Based on that reaction, you really do have a boy you like”

Seeing his daughter's reaction, Lord Pardomshiha grinned. He had suspected that she might have someone she likes ever since the whole engagement incident.

“O-Oh no!?”

“I see, I see, even you, who were so devoted to being serious...”

While Ruth was a woman, she had matured to become someone suitable to succeed the Pardomshiha family. She was deeply loyal to the royal families and a knight that had sworn to abide to justice. However, that might have been a misfortune as a woman. Being too serious, Ruth didn't try to chase after her own happiness and simply served as the shield of the royal families and the future successor of the Pardomshiha family. It somewhat pained Lord Pardomshiha to see his daughter like that. While it had ended in a disaster, the arranged marriage between Ruth and Elexis had been his attempt to show consideration for his daughter.

Yet it seemed Ruth had already fallen in love with someone, and Lord Pardomshiha was in a great mood as it seemed his worries would solve themselves. Normally he wore his unbendable loyalty and manliness on his sleeves, but right now he was nothing but a doting parent.

“What kind of man is it? No, don't get me wrong, since it's the man you've fallen for I have no intentions of stopping you! I was simply curious. So what kind of man is it!? Is he as strong as me!?”

“U-Uhm, t-that's not, uhm, you see... that's right, please don't bring up a topic like that in a place like this!!”

Ruth on the other hand had been completely knocked off of her rhythm. Ruth was someone that was upfront about everything, but she still had an appearance to uphold. Talking about the man she loves in a place full of people like that was out of the question.

“I see... so you're not denying it?”

“Please be more serious!!”

“Ah, I'm sorry. Princess Theiamillis is still missing after all”

Having cooled his head a little after Ruth's severe reaction, Lord Pardomshiha admonished himself and returned to normal. He too was very concerned of the missing princess. Seeing her father like that, Ruth was

also able to return to normal.

“... We know she is safe as she is with a knight who is guarding her”

“Is that for certain?”

“Yes. It is a person who does not make mistakes”

Ruth vouched with confidence. While she didn't know what kind of situation they were in, she had absolute confidence that Koutarou would protect Theia.

“... I see... a guarding knight, huh...”

For some reason, Lord Pardomshiha nodded his repeatedly in understanding.

“Excuse me?”

“It's the man you fell in love with. It just hit me as you were speaking of him so proudly”

Lord Pardomshiha sensed that Ruth fully trusted the guarding knight she had mentioned. It was far from normal for the serious and stubborn Ruth to leave Theia to someone else, and feel relieved about it.

“Thinking about it, it's the man that you, the shield of the royal families, has accepted. You wouldn't be able to entrust Her Highness to him unless he was as trustworthy as you, or even more so. Moreover, you wouldn't fall for him either. I see, I see, so that's what it was”

“J-Just stop it already!!”

“You found a good man, Ruth. Yes, very good, I'm happy for you”

“I really will get angry, Father!!”

Ever since her reunion with her father, Ruth had been continuously knocked off her rhythm. Thanks to that, the distance between the father and daughter that had been so far apart shrunk in an instant, yet she didn't seem to notice that at all. That's why she would spend a little while longer feeling uncomfortable.

Part 3

As the girls that had gotten off of O-hime were warmly watching over Ruth's misfortune, only one wasn't looking at her. That was Maki, who had once been an evil magical girl.

“... So this is Forthorthe... our true home...”

When Maki had gotten off of O-hime and her feet touched the ground, she held different feelings from the other girls. The magical kingdom of Folsaria, where Maki had been born, had it as a goal to someday return to the their true home, Forthorthe. Those feelings were no longer as powerful as they once had been, due to the passing of time, but it was still engraved into the very souls of all Folsarians. And for Maki, that goal had finally been accomplished. While looking at it from a planetary level, she was still far away from Forthorthe, but this planet was without a doubt part of the Holy Forthorthe Galactic Empire as well.

“We've made it here without dying, Nav— no, Maki-san”

”Nana... -san...”

However, there was one who could understand how Maki felt. That person was Nana, another Folsarian.

“It feels kind of strange”

“I think I understand you. Fufu...”

In the magical kingdom of Folsaria there was a unique saying that was sometimes used during a fierce battle. That was 'die and return to your true home'. In the past, Maki had said those words to Koutarou. It's meaning was something to the point of 'I'll definitely kill you', but the desire for their true home was mixed in. It also had a meaning of, even if you can't return in reality, you can at least return in death.

That was the kind of emotion they held towards it, but now they had actually reached their true home. They were truly standing on the land that they could only see in their dreams. That strange feeling was something that was hard to describe.

“I wonder if Maya and the others are feeling the same thing”

Nana took a few steps out on the deck where O-hime had landed, and looked up at the sky outside the window. There she saw the planet of Forthorthe being lit up by the sun.

“I think so. I'm sure Maya-sama and the others have already gone to the planet of Forthorthe”

Maki lined up next to Nana and looked up at Forthorthe alongside her. She thought of Maya, who was most likely on that planet. Since she had been her apprentice for so long, she could faintly imagine what Maya was thinking.

“And they'll be even more motivated than before, huh”

”Yes. They'll build a base and expand their power here, before repressing Folsaria and boldly returning to Forthorthe. I'm sure that's the plot of the story they're working on”

Maya was awfully prideful. That's why she ultimately wasn't planning on returning to Forthorthe while being protected by him. She simply treated him as an equal. In preparations for their grand return, she had now touched the ground of Forthorthe, and her desire would surely be stronger than ever before.

“We can't underestimate them”

”Yes. I think they'll be fundamentally different enemies from before. Maya-sama and the others now have a clearly defined goal”

Up until now, Nana had specifically avoided using the term enemy. But Maki spoke that word herself. Since that was something very important, Nana decided to confirm it once more.

“... Enemies is fine, isn't it?”

Maki clearly nodded her head to Nana's investigative words.

“Yes”

Maki had hardened her resolve a long time ago.

“I'm sure if we make the effort, we can come to an understanding with

Maya-sama and the others. We might even be able to walk along the same path for a while. But—”

“— at the very end, we'll choose different paths?”

“Yes. The thing we value the most and the thing Maya-sama and the others value the most are different. That's why the very final choice will be different”

Maki wanted connections between people. Darkness Rainbow on the other hand fundamentally wanted freedom. Ultimately, Maki and Darkness Rainbow would never be able to see eye to eye, as she wanted connections between people, while they wanted to be free from even the bonds to others. Sadly, harmony and freedom was something that was difficult to have coexist in their purest forms. Just like how Maki had been unable to tie down Crimson, who only wanted to fight, with friendship

“It'll be a hard fight”

“I'm prepared for it. Besides... I'm not alone anymore. I have Yurika and everyone with me”

”I see, so that's why”

Nana seemed satisfied and smiled.

“What is?”

”It's just that when I was watching you fight back then, I saw that you were far stronger than when you fought against me, and I wondered why that was”

In the past, Maki had always carried something like resignation with her. However, the current Maki didn't have that. She had gotten an iron will of never giving up. Since magic was affected by the strength of one's will, Maki was now far stronger than before. And Nana had finally understood the reason why thanks to what Maki had just said.

“... It seems like you've found something to protect”

“Yes, I'll protect it at all costs”

Maki nodded. She was fully aware of what she wanted to protect, and what to do to protect it. She was ready to fight, even if she would go up against Maya or Crimson. Nana sensed Maki's resolve and smiled bitterly in her mind as she realized that there was no reason to worry.

“By the way, Maki-san”

“Yes?”

“When this is all over, do you have any intentions of becoming a Rainbow?”

“Me!?”

“Yes”

In the past, Maki had been a one-colored indigo rainbow. But now that she had matured, she began carrying all kinds of colors, and had become a real rainbow. That's why Nana believed that Maki would defend that beautiful rainbow.

“You're joking”

“No. The current you could definitely become one. You've got a splendid rainbow color that wouldn't even lose to Yurika-chan”

“... I, hope so...”

In front of the two was the planet of Forthorthe. And as if wrapping around it, was a beautiful rainbow.

At the Barrier

Part 1

Sunday, November 21

While O-hime had reached the Elfaria faction base, Koutarou and the others were still inside the forest. As expected, having landed within a forest, and having to travel on foot made a big difference.

“Hey, Satomi-san”

”What?”

“Didn't something move over there?”

”... You're starting with that again?”

”But...!”

Koutarou, Yurika and Theia could only move at night. And Yurika was bad at dealing with the forest at night. She was always scared that something might jump out from the nearby bushes and attack.

“You really do become useless once you lose motivation”

”Even if you say that, I can't help it! It's scary!”

”Boo!”

That was when Theia snuck up behind Yurika and scared her with a loud voice.

“Kyaaa— Mmmm!”

As Yurika suddenly let out a scream, Koutarou quickly covered her mouth.

“Theia, think about the situation we're in! What are you going to do if there are enemies around!”

“I know, I checked the area with my sensors before doing it. There's no problems”

”Mmmmmmm, Mhmm, Mmmmmmm!”

“But why would you do it right now!”

“I figured she might calm down if she got a little shock”

”That just has the opposite effect on her!”

”Mm, mmmm... … ...”

“... She's gotten quiet”

“Ah, Yurika!! Breathe!!”

While it was misfortunate for Yurika, the truth was that her constant fright was useful for Koutarou and Theia. As they were in a bad situation where they isolated from their allies, they were starting to get gloomy. But Yurika's fear of absolutely nothing helped erase that. She was what was keeping them together. But unfortunately for Yurika, none of the three realized that.

“... I think the both of you don't have enough consideration for me! I'm really scared here!”

Even though the commotion had died down, Yurika was still angry. But as the anger made her forget about her fear, she was walking like normal. So in the end, it was just as Theia had planned.

“I said I was sorry. It wasn't on purpose”

“If you really feel that way, hold my hand harder”

“Okay, okay, you really are a handful”

That said, Yurika's anger was starting to die down. Because as an apology, Koutarou was leading her by the hand. Thanks to that, Yurika's focus shifted from the commotion just before to the sensation of Koutarou's hand.

“... Ehehehe...”

When Yurika was holding Koutarou's hand, she was thinking back to that kiss on the cheek. As she did, the feelings from back that filled her chest and pushed out what anger she had left. It would only be a matter of time before the anger was completely gone.

“... You little”

Ding.

“What now?”

”It's nothing”

”Then why did you kick me?”

“I said it was nothing!”

“Ding. Ding.

But for some reason, the anger within Yurika was moving over to Theia. Koutarou would receive quite a few more kicks until he realized that and properly dealt with it.

Part 2

Koutarou's armor and Theia's Combat Dress had used up most of their energy during the atmospheric re-entry, but the other parts were still functioning. There were some parts damaged during the re-entry, but nothing had ceased to function. So while they couldn't fly or put up barriers, the other functions worked as normal. That's why both the armor's and the dress' sensor picked up the approaching enemy.

“Alert, detected an approaching heat source. Distance 200 meters. Based on the quantity of heat, there is a 70% chance of it being a pack of wild wolves”

While the planet's ecosystem was artificial it still had somewhat dangerous creatures living on it. If they had no predators, the herbivores would increase without end, and would eventually make the ecosystem unsustainable. In order to avoid that, they intentionally prepared a top of the

food chain. That was the wolf. Wolves had the intelligence to realize it was dangerous to approach people. Because of that, humans and wolves would rarely cross paths, but that was just when they were in their own territories. Right now, Koutarou and the others were in the middle of the wolves territory. They were in a situation where they couldn't complain about being attacked.

“S-See, there really was something”

”Stop clinging to me. I can't move”

”I'm scared!”

”Theia, why are you joining in!”

”It's a joke”

”Jokes don't work on wolves”

”I know, I know”

“You get off too, Yurika”

”... Okay”

Koutarou and the others had panicked a little when they first noticed the wolves existence, but they quickly recovered and began making plans. That was probably thanks to their many battles worth of experience.

“We're the ones intruding on their territory... I wonder if there's a way of avoiding a fight”

Koutarou could tell the killing intent the wolves were giving off thanks to the powers Sanae had given him. They were angry at Koutarou and the others for intruding on their territory. Koutarou and the others had just happened to pass by the area, and they didn't know the rules of nature, so they had ended up intruding. Koutarou wanted to avoid a fight.

“What can we do to make them forgive us?”

Yurika spoke as she squinted into the darkness. Because of the distance she couldn't see them, but in front of where she was looking there were without a doubt bared fangs. Yurika was scared.

“We should hurry and distance ourselves”

”If we run away too quickly, they'll think we're weak and attack”

”Really? What makes you say that?”

“That's what I would do if I was a wolf”

”Well, there's no doubting that”

”... If there's something you want to say, why don't you just say it out loud”

”Oh I wouldn't dare”

”Then how about we run away slowly?”

”That would normally be the way to do it. But there are exceptions”

“Like what kind of exceptions?”

“Like when they're starving”

”Hiiiii!!”

In order to avoid fighting wolves, Koutarou and the others slowly changed direction. As they did, the wolves changed direction as well, following Koutarou and the others without closing the distance. It didn't seem like they would attack, but they showed no signs of leaving either.

“So for now we're observing each other's moves”

“Can't we just hide and wait for them to go away?”

”I'd love to do that... but they are beasts with excellent senses”

”How about it, Yurika?”

In this situation, Yurika's magic was the most reliable thing they had. If they used their weapons they would stand out too much.

“If I wanted too, I could get them to go away, but that would use up a lot of magical power”

”Then Darkness Rainbow would catch on, huh”

“This is a painful problem”

They wanted to get away from the wolves pursuing them. But if they carelessly used magic, they would end up calling forth Darkness Rainbow. It was a rather difficult situation.

“Grrrrrr, arf arf!!”

That was when the wolves in the darkness began stirring up a commotion. It was as if they had started a fight.

“What happened!?”

At first, Koutarou thought that the wolves had attacked. That was a natural conclusion in their current situation. However, the sounds of the wolves wasn't getting closer at all. They still kept their distance. That was where the armor's AI gave them an answer.

“Warning, enemy craft approaching. There is a 95% chance of being a small reconnaissance drone”

The wolves had started a commotion because a strange machine had approached. Unlike Koutarou and the others, the strange machine, the reconnaissance drone approached without giving a care of the wolves. Because of that, they decided to stop worrying about Koutarou and the others who showed no signs of approaching, and turned their attention to the machine.

“I see, so that's why the wolves—”

”Koutarou, Yurika, we're hiding right now!!”

”Got it!”

“O-Okay!!”

Koutarou and the others hurriedly hid under a fallen tree. Right after that, the reconnaissance drone appeared. Its design was similar to the fighters that Ruth always used. The reconnaissance drone lit up the area with a searchlight and gradually approached Koutarou and the others. Moreover, behind was the pack of wolves. As the wolves were still raising a commotion, Koutarou and the others couldn't miss them when they entered the area lit up by the searchlight.

“... Did they find out that we were using magic to move around?”

Looking at the searchlight panning back and forth to the sides, Yurika uneasily whispered. As she was always haunted by misfortune, Yurika's first thought was that she had messed up her spell.

“... If that was the case, they'd come straight for us. It's either just a coincidence or they found the situation suspicious”

Theia's battle hardened intuition told her that this wasn't Yurika's mistake. If Yurika had failed, than the surveillance drone wouldn't be panning around the area, but charge straight for them. Yet it had come into contact with the pack of wolves first. Theia believed that meant one of two things.

The first was that the reconnaissance drone was simply on patrol, and happened to encounter a pack of wolves. It then decided to examine the nearby heat sources.

The second was that it came to investigate the area as the wolves were acting strange. In the forests of Alaia, wolves were amongst the top of the ecosystem. Yet that pack of wolves were following and keeping their distance to three small animals, being Koutarou, Yurika and Theia who had a much smaller heat signature, instead of attacking. Chances were that the drone had come to investigate that strange event.

“... So they're not certain either?”

“... That should be the case. They shouldn't know that we are using magic after all”

The surveillance drone had either come across the wolves by chance, or come to investigate their strange movements. Either way, it wasn't here because it assumed Koutarou and the others were near. It just came to make sure that it wasn't that one in a million chance.

“... Then let's just keep hiding here”

”... Yurika, I find myself agreeing with you for once”

”... Alright, it's time to stop talking”

The three closed their mouths, held their breaths and observed the drone. It was still spinning its searchlight around as it got closer. It was far from slow, but it sure felt like it to the group. The few minutes it took for the drone to get close felt like more than an hour. This was the first time any of the three had felt like time was moving this slowly.

After what felt like an hour, the reconnaissance drone was now right next to the three. As it was so close they could practically touch it if they reached out, they could hear the small mechanical sounds coming from it. Theia and Yurika silently held onto Koutarou's hands. Both of them thought that they would be able to fool the sensor, but they weren't certain. Knowing what would happen if they were found by the imperial army here, that small risk created a great deal of anxiety. In order to erase that anxiety that they could do nothing about, they needed the heat of someone else. That probably would have been the case even if Koutarou wasn't with them. Having experienced the same thing several times over on the battlefield, Koutarou understood that feeling very well. That's why he firmly squeezed back.

Was the operator cautious, or had the AI been made to be thorough? In order to examine the small heat sources under the fallen tree, the reconnaissance drone reached out with a small arm.

Not good!

Koutarou noticed those movements and sweat started dripping down from his forehead. Theia and Yurika instinctively squeezed Koutarou's hands harder. If the arm had a camera or a different type of sensor on it, they were out. Steeling himself, Koutarou behind thinking of how he should protect Theia.

However, that was when it happened.

“Kikiki!!”

A small animal jumped from between Koutarou and Yurika at the reconnaissance drone. The animal brushed the side of the arm and ran past it, and the drone turned around to chase after the animal, and it followed the animal that it had missed.

Come, both of you!

Not wasting that opening, Koutarou pulled on Theia's and Yurika's hands and got out from under the fallen tree. While keeping an eye on the searchlight, they moved to a different fallen tree in an area that had already been examined.

Fortunately, the reconnaissance drone hadn't noticed their movements. After confirming what the small animal that had run off was, the reconnaissance drone returned to where Koutarou and the others had

originally been. After examining the fallen tree until it was satisfied, it disappeared off to somewhere. It seemed the pack of wolves were chasing the reconnaissance drone as their howls grew distant.

“... Geez, it's finally gone...”

Koutarou was better at handling tension in battles than the kind he felt while hiding. That\s why, once he was certain that the drone and wolves had moved on, he leaned over the fallen tree and let out a sigh.

“Phew. We better grateful for that small creature...”

“That was scary~”

“Really, I thought my heart would stop”

Yurika was simply scared, but Theia felt the same as Koutarou and let out a big sigh. Those few minutes had exhausted the three.

“Theia, there's still some time left before dawn, but how about we leave at this for today”

”You're right. It's best not to push our luck too far”

”I can finally rest...”

Their exhaustion had reached its peak. There was still over an hour left before first light, but nothing good could come from continuing to move while their concentration was dulled. The three decided to find a place to hide and rest.

Part 3

Koutarou and the others slipped out of the forest on the night of the fourth day after falling onto Alaia. They had in a straight line, travelled a distance of 100 kilometers over three and a half days. Considering they had taken detours to avoid coming into contact with enemies, that was rather quick.

Past the forest was a small town. Once they got past that town they would enter Pardomshiha which would make things much easier for them. While

the people on Alaia were supportive of Elfaria, the people in the Pardomshiha territory were even more so. The citizens felt that they were members of the Pardomshiha family in spirit. As a result, the majority of the local imperial army were part of the Elfaria faction.

However, it wouldn't be easy to get through the town. The town was on the border to the Pardomshiha territory, and the soldiers here were under Lord Bandarion's rule. Which meant that getting past this town was their last hurdle.

“Can't we just take a detour around the town instead of going through it?”

”The town is situated within a valley, if we want to go past, we'd have to climb up cliffs. Moreover, the cliffs have various defensive means to keep the animals from entering the town”

”Would it shock you?”

“It would start with that and gradually get worse”

The devices made to keep the boundary between animal and man were made by taking the creatures of the forest into consideration. At first they would serve as a simple warning, and gradually get harsher. Sensing that they were in danger, the animals would give up half ways through.

“How about we fly with magic?”

”Flying in and infiltrating is practically a rule of magic, that would be one of the first things they set up countermeasures for”

“I see... so we're all thinking the same”

Yurika's judgment was that they would do best to avoid using magic to fly. As tactics using magic advanced daily, there had of course been attempts of using magic to infiltrate using flight, and countermeasures for it existed. One of the very basic countermeasures was antiaircraft magic monitoring.

Moreover, as there were less people flying in and out of the town, then there were people entering from the surface, it was possible to check everyone more thoroughly. Making their security even tighter, they might even shoot down anyone without permission.

“In that case, breaking through the front without using magic is more efficient against magic”

Normally, using magic for stealth was a battle between stealth magic and detection magic. The stealth user would need to conceal their appearance, erase their sounds and hide their traces of magical power. The detectors on the other hand would need to detect them somehow. That's why not using magic was an efficient way of avoiding the detection means.

That said, not using magic, chances were that they would get detected by the army's surveillance at the gate leading into the town. As Theia was famous, that risk was especially high. A disguise might be good enough, but they didn't have the tools for that with them. Overall it was a tough decision.

“Or we might go all out and use a large spell to get us through instantly”

As detection using magic would need to be consistently used, excluding times when the detectors are especially prepared, the effects were limited. Because of that, using a spell at full force for a very short period of time might make it possible to escape detection. While that might be impossible in Folsaria, in Forthorthe where magic hadn't spread to the imperial army, it was certainly possible.

“So Yurika... if you turned us into dogs or cats and erased the traces of magical power, how long could you keep it up?”

Koutarou had chosen the latter option to get through the town, using a lot of magic in a short span of time. As Theia was with them, breaking through without magic would be difficult. And if they were to use magic, it would be easier to turn themselves into small animals than to simply disguise themselves. Animals wouldn't get checked out by soldiers after all. But since that would use more magical power, there was still a risk.

“Well... with three people to transform and a need to conceal a wide area of magical power... uhm... ten minutes, maybe...?”

Yurika used her fingers to count and figured she would last ten minutes. Turning humans into a completely different creature required a high level spell. Doing that for three people while also erasing any traces would use up several times more magical power than just for one person. Even with Yurika's ability, ten minutes would be around her limit.

“How many minutes are you absolutely certain you can last?”

“I'm certain that I can last five minutes”

“Wouldn't using an illusion be better?”

Theia felt uneasy after hearing that they might only last five minutes. There was quite a distance from where they were currently hiding to the city, and Theia felt like five minutes might just barely be enough. On top of that, not knowing what the situation was past the gate was another cause for concern. That's why Theia suggested that an illusion which would drain less magical power might be safer.

“In that case, the observation devices at the gate would be a problem. I think a transformation is the only way to fool them all”

“I feel the same way”

“Hmm, that is problematic...”

Illusions had their own limits. While they could fool humans, they couldn't fool machines. Another spell would be required for that. Weight sensors, X-rays, heat sources, voices were all devices that might be used. In order to fool all of them, the amount of magical power would in the end be about the same as simply transforming.

“Then how about we get close to the gate with an illusion before transforming?”

Unexpectedly, Yurika came up with an answer to the problem. As she rarely showed much intelligence on a daily basis, Koutarou and Theia looked at each other.

“You're awfully bright today”

”Yes, that method would make full use of the five minute time limit of transforming”

The observation equipment was focused near the town. In other words, they could use a more haphazard method until they got close before transforming.

“Ehehehe, I'm good at managing my small allowance”

How they would get past the gate with a limited amount of magical power was similar to how to get by a month with a small allowance. Yurika had an abundance of knowhow in this area.

“... That's definitely not a technique you can boast about”

”Koutarou, why don't you praise when she's useful for once”

”... Good girl”

”Satomi-san, you can buy me food later if you want♪”

“You really are a strange girl”

”I'm a magical girl after all”

“That's true”

Thus Koutarou and the others decided on their plan. They would transform into animals and go through the front. But with that decided, they still had the problem of figuring out what kind of animal to transform into. Each animal had its good and bad parts.

“... Yurika would be fine as a horse's rear”

“No way!!”

”Wasn't that your specialty”

“While I'm good at it, why would I just be the rear!? That's clearly strange!!”

While they would stand out less as small animals, but the smaller they got, the shorter their legs, which meant it would take more time to travel. While being larger meant longer legs, they would probably be stopped by soldiers. If they turned into birds they would be small and fast, but then they would act suspiciously by going through the gate. They needed animals that wouldn't be suspicious to the soldiers, but not too slow.

Maybe I want Yurika to become a horse because of my sentiment...

Koutarou was thinking back to the magician he met in the past who had transformed into a horse. So despite knowing the circumstances, he had suggested that Yurika should go as a horse. Realizing that was impossible, Koutarou withdrew his opinion”

“Okay, okay, I'm sorry”

”You're always quick to get so mean to me, Satomi-san, geez”

“Realistically speaking, cats and dogs would be the most appropriate”

When it came to being close to humans, and not being suspicious despite crossing the gate, pets were the best choice. As there were cats and dogs in Forthorthe as well, it was easy for Yurika to get a clear image in her mind.

“Satomi-san will be a dog, Theia-chan will be a cat, and I will be—”

“A pony?”

”Satomi-san!!”

”I get it. Just make it a chicken”

”No way!! I'll be a cat too!!”

In the end, it was decided that Koutarou would be a dog, and Theia and Yurika would be cats. All that was left was to walk alongside some people entering the town and cross the gate. The soldiers would surely just assume they were the pets of the person they were walking next to.

Part 4

Up until now, Koutarou and the others had moved at night, but since they would stand out when there were so few people out and about, they waited for day before going into the town. Fortunately, unlike in the forest, there were plenty of people around, so the chances of being spotted were low.

As the time came, the three first used an illusion to turn themselves into different people and approached the town. Once they were close enough they then transformed into animals behind some cover and headed towards the town once more. As luck would have it, no problems occurred and nobody was paying attention to Koutarou and the others.

“Woof, woof”

”Nyaaa”

Up front was Koutarou as a dog. He had become a Shiba dog with lovely round eyes. Following him was Theia who had become a Persian cat with beautiful golden fur. Lastly was Yurika who had become a cat with pink color, her strange appearance looked like something straight out of a

manga.

Cats and dogs existed in Forthorthe as well. Strictly speaking, they were different creatures, but in terms of pets with almost the same look, they existed. Thanks to that, nobody seemed suspicious as the three approached the gate to the town. At best, animals lovers snuck a few peeks at them.

“Woof”

”Nyaa”

However, Koutarou and Theia were panicking. That might only be natural as this was their first time turning into animals. Because of that, both of them had trouble walking, as walking on all fours were harder than expected. They were only somehow managing because they were athletic. That's why they were always worried that someone might think their walking was strange.

“Meow meow♪”

Meanwhile, Yurika showed off some magnificent footwork. She had light and delicate steps, and moved almost like a normal cat. That was because Yurika's acting as a horse's rear had reached a master's level and affected her walking. A horse and cat had different ways to walk, but Yurika had a clear image of how creatures with four legs walked. That allowed her to take such magnificent footsteps.

“Meow♪”

”Woof”

The situation was the reverse of normal. Usually it was Yurika who was getting in the way, but there was no worry of that now. If anything, Koutarou and Theia were the ones who would likely get in the way. Knowing that, Yurika began taking the lead as they walked. While it hadn't been her intention, it worked out in the group's favor. Yurika cheerfully walking in the front and Koutarou and Theia following behind with awkward steps made it look like the two were reluctant subordinates following their boss. As a result, nobody held an unnatural impression of them, only a humorous one.

“Nyaa”

All three felt tension as they reached the town gate. It was open, but

protected by five soldiers. There was one soldier on either side of the gate, one soldier in the middle and two in a nearby small outpost. The soldiers on either side of the gate were holding weapons and keeping an eye on their surroundings. The soldier in the middle was confirming the identities of those entering the town. Finally, the two in the building were taking a break while also confirming that the observation equipment weren't giving off any alarms.

The problem was if they could get past these five soldiers without being questioned. While they were transformed into animals, it wasn't guaranteed that the soldiers would let them past. They might get simply chased off, or if they were bad soldiers, even put down. The three couldn't help but feel nervous. Yurika who was a coward, who had been standing in the front, was now frozen in place due to the tension.

“Nyaa, nyaa”

Even with Koutarou pushing her from behind, she wouldn't move forward. She had completely lost her nerve.

“Woof”

”Nyaa”

Sensing that nothing else could be done, Koutarou and Theia left Yurika behind and continued. They only have a few minutes. It might have seemed cruel, but they had no time to stand around.

“Meooooooow Meoww!!”

“Woof”

”Nyaa”

Confirming that Yurika was chasing after them, Koutarou and Theia looked at each other and called out. They had left Yurika behind because they knew this would get her to move. Knowing her personality, Koutarou and Theia knew that this would get her to act.

“Woof”

“Nyaa”

“... Meow”

However Koutarou and Theia knew how Yurika felt. From the perspective of cats and dogs, humans were very large creatures. The pressure from those huge giants was overwhelming. That sensation grew stronger, the closer they got. By the time they were right in front of them, their hearts were beating extremely fast. Even the possibility that they might get crushed cross their mind.

“Are you little things on your way back home?”

However, the voice of the soldier protecting the gate helped defuse the tension.

“I've never seen them before, and they're of some unusual kind”

”They probably left through another gate and just happened to come around here”

Fortunately, the soldiers here were generous towards cats and dogs. Based on their tone, it seemed like quite a few cats and dogs passed through the gate. So even if some animals they didn't recognize came through, they didn't think much of it.

“Wof”

“Oh, aren't you quite the polite one. Go on through”

“Nyaa”

Feeling relieved, Koutarou and the others passed through the gate. Joy filled up their chest to replace the tension. Having suffered to get this far, they felt like breaking out into dance. But if they did that now, everything would go to waste. They would need to keep the joy bottled up until they were out of sight of the soldiers.

“An unusual kind!? Where!?”

However, all of a sudden, an unexpected problem occurred.

“Look, over there. Just by that corner”

”You're right! Species of cats and dogs that I've never seen before! I'll go take a closer look!”

”Hey, wait! We're on duty!”

“It's just a little, just a little!”

The unexpected problem was one of the soldiers in the small outpost came chasing after Koutarou and the others. The soldier was an animal lover, and came flying out of the outpost when he overheard the others talking. He was excited to see species of cats and dogs that he had never seen before, and instinctively chased after them.

“Wait up! I'll give you some snacks! Woof woof, meow meow!”

”Woof!?”

”Meow!”

“Nyaaa, nyaaaaa!!”

Yurika was the first to run. Her decisions were swift at times like these. But when it came to simple speed, Koutarou and Theia were a step above her. They quickly overtook her and left her in the rear. The three dashed into an alley in the order of Koutarou, Theia and Yurika.

“Nyaaaaaaa, Nya nyaaaaaaa!!”

”Don't rampage about, I just want to get to know you better”

However, the soldier caught up to them, and Yurika was caught. She desperately struggled to escape the soldier, but due the overwhelming difference in physique, she was quickly lifted up.

“That's strange... Is this fur natural? It's awfully flashy...”

”Grrrrrr”

”Don't get so angry. I'm not trying to be mean”

Koutarou barked to scare off the soldier, but he didn't seem to be letting Yurika go. As expected, a small Shiba dog wouldn't scare anyone.

“Nyaaa!!”

Realizing that intimidation wasn't working, Theia took direct action. She bit on the soldier's sleeve and hung onto him.

“Woah!?”

”... Hissss!”

Surprised, the soldier let go off Yurika. Yet Yurika displayed her very un catlike ability as she landed face first into the ground.

“You guys are really tight-knit, aren't you?”

“Unyaaaa!?”

Yurika had somehow been able to escape, but this time Theia was caught. Her fangs were caught on the soldiers sleeve, making it impossible for her to run away.

“Nyaaaa, Nyaaaaaa!!”

“You're really energetic... and you're even more unusual than the last one. Let me get a closer look at you”

Theia struggled even more than Yurika, but even then she couldn't escape. The difference in physique between humans and cats really was overwhelming. The sensation of going up against a giant wasn't wrong.

“Woof!”

It was a very bad situation. Sensing the crisis, Koutarou headed towards the soldier, knowing he was at a disadvantage. He had to rescue Theia as quickly as possible. But—

“Woah, w-what!?”

Just as Koutarou was jumping at the soldier, their bodies was covered in white smoke. Once the smoke vanished, Koutarou and the others had returned to their normal appearances. Having been caught by the soldiers, they'd wasted the remaining time they had, and the transformation spell ran out.

Part 5

When the smoke dissipated, the soldier was first surprised by the cat in his hands turning into a girl. He was stunned at the impossible spectacle that

had just happened before him.

“The cat, turned into a person!? W-What just happened!?”

The soldier couldn't believe his eyes. Since he couldn't tell even by touching her, it wasn't just a hologram. In that case, it meant some other scientifical technology had to have been used, but he didn't know of any that could turn a person into a cat.

“W-Who are you guys— Ah!?”

However, his confusion was stopped by yet another surprise. Even more so than a cat turning into a girl.

Princess Theiamillis!? How could it be!?

His voice faltered from the surprise. Golden hair, perfect features and eyes full of power. The soldier recognized the girl the cat had turned into. It was the seventh princess of the Holy Forthorthe Galactic Empire. Theiamillis Gre Forthorthe.

Is it the real one!? Or is something wrong with me!?

Encountering Princess Theiamillis while on duty on the sixth planet from the sun was completely unexpected. Compared to his surprise from a cat turning into a person, something more realistic was even more surprising. While his confusion had settled down, he began worrying for his sanity.

But wait, if this is the real one, why is she here? I see! The report about illegal aliens that landed a few days ago!!

However, the knowledge he had proved that the person in front of him was Princess Theiamillis herself.

A few days ago, an unidentified spaceship had landed on Alaia. And there was a chance that some of the crew of that ship had landed in the forest by the town. As a result, many of the soldiers stationed here had been sent out to search. Even the ones that remained as guards at the gate had been ordered to strictly check all who enter the town. And now, a girl that appeared to be the wanted Princess Theiamillis had appeared before him.

The unidentified spaceship was part of the Elfaria faction, and for some reason, Princess Theiamillis had gotten separated from it, and landed in the forest. Many soldiers were mobilized in order to capture her. While he didn't

know how she had transformed into a cat, it seemed fitting that it was some kind of technology protecting the royal family, and it would also explain how they escaped the encirclement.

Thinking of it like that, the soldier became convinced that the girl in front of him was none other than Princess Theiamillis. That was the most natural explanation for the situation.

Not good...

The knight protecting Princess Theiamillis instinctively placed his hand on the handle of his sword. That was because if the soldier were to attempt to capture the princess, things would get very bad.

“Well, isn't this an unusual species... such long and golden fur”

However, the soldier didn't try to apprehend the princess. He spoke as if he was speaking to a cat, and slowly put the girl back on the ground.

“... What, are you doing...?”

The one surprised by that was the princess. They were still on enemy territory. The soldiers should have orders to capture the princess on sight. The soldiers had their own families to protect, so it would be difficult to go against those orders. Yet the soldier let Princess Theiamillis go.

“I'm sorry for being mean, kitties. I pride myself in my love of animals”

The soldier put his hand on his chest and deeply bowed to the puzzled

princess. While his words were aimed at cats and dogs, his behavior was without a doubt aimed at a princess.

“... Thank you. I won't forget your loyalty for the rest of my life...”

The soldiers loyalty towards the royal families was unshakable, and he held pride in that, he simply changed the words to be more suitable directed towards a cat. Realizing that, Princess Theiamillis, thanked him in a gentle voice.

“Go on, don't dilly dally. I hear the north side of town is a gathering place for cats, so you'll do well to go there”

”Yes. Thank you for your troubles!”

Princess Theiamillis wiped away the tears forming in her eyes and turned her back to the soldier, and she ran up to her guarding knight who had watched over the entire thing. The knight had already removed his hand from the handle of his sword and had a nostalgic look in his eyes as he stared at the smiling princess coming running towards him, and towards the guard behind her.

“... You've helped us again, Orion. Thank you”

Before turning his back to him, the knight threw those words to the soldier. He left taking the princess and the other girl with him. The soldier stood in place, looking at the princess and the others until they could no longer be seen.

“Hey, how long are you going to be playing around”

”Hm? Ah, sorry, it was such an unusual cat, I couldn't help myself”

Just as the princess and the other could no longer be seen, the other soldiers came running up to him, worried that he might incur the wrath of their superior officer. The soldier looked in the direction of where the princess had vanished one last time before returning back to the gate with his companions.

Why did that knight know my name...?

As the soldier returned to his post, he kept thinking of why the knight knew his name. But no matter how hard he thought about it, he couldn't figure out the reason. He didn't know, but his heart leapt with joy for some reason.

That's why he was satisfied with his decision.

Friends

Part 1

Wednesday, November 24

The animal-loving soldier had said that the north side of the town was apparently a gathering place for cats. Koutarou and the others assumed that meant that there was an Elfaria faction base there. As he needed to maintain that he had only met a cat due to his position, that was the best he could do. Because of that, Koutarou and the others had come to the northern side of town.

“We managed to get here rather easily”

Fortunately, there had been almost no difficulty getting here from the gates. Compared up until now, it had been almost too easy, and Yurika felt somewhat uneasy.

“It's not like soldiers would be patrolling all over town. This is like a developed country in an advanced nation in Earth terms”

“Besides, most of the soldiers here were sent into the forest”

It was very uncommon to see soldiers patrolling around the middle of a town in a nation that has existed for a long time. That was because of the way wars were fought had changed. Back when swords and spears were used to fight wars, several percent of the population had been used as soldiers, but as time passed and weapons changed, the number of soldiers dropped. Even in Forthorthe where knights and distinguished military services were respected, the number of soldiers didn't exceed 0,2% of the population. Because of that, it was uncommon to come across a soldier when walking around in a town. On top of that, many soldiers stationed in the town had been sent into the forest to capture Theia and the others, leaving the town loosely guarded.

“I got that, but how do we meet with our allies?”

”You weren't listening at all, were you?”

“Ehehehehe~”

“Don't worry, I've been told of how contact representatives come into contact with one another”

As the Elfaria faction was currently being treated as an illegal organization, their base and branches needed to be kept secret. Of course, they'd need to take utmost care when coming into contact. As simply introducing themselves was dangerous, there was a procedure that had been determined beforehand. Theia and the others had been told of that method, so getting a contact wouldn't be difficult.

“Koutarou, how does it look today?”

”It seems like today's sign is belongings and password”

Contact representatives coming from out of town would stand in a decided place at a decided time, with a specific belonging. In response, someone from the local branch would bump into them by coincidence and give them the password. If they could answer that correctly, they would be treated as allies. That was the method for today.

By the way, there were also other methods of contact, which were different every day. That way, even if one method leaked, it wouldn't have an affect on the others.

Part 2

The method of contact for today was to stand under a pillar with a clock installed on it in the center of the park at 1:40PM holding a yellow bouquet.

“... I just hope everything works out...”

The time was now 1:35PM. Koutarou was standing under the pillar on his own. He was wearing local clothes, and holding a yellow bouquet. Meanwhile, Theia and Yurika were hiding in a different place. Once

Koutarou had contacted the Elfaria faction, he would call for them. That was the best they could do to protect Theia.

“It's about time, huh”

Even if they followed the procedure, there was no guarantee that they'd be able to come into contact with the local Elfaria faction. Information might have been leaked or in worst case scenario, the entire branch might have been destroyed. In that situation, it would be the imperial army coming instead. While Koutarou figured that it would probably would be okay, he still felt anxious. As the designated time drew closer, that anxiety grew stronger. As he spent time feeling unsettled, the minute hand finally reached 40 minutes.

That was when a ball intended for sports rolled up to Koutarou's feet. It's size and material made it look very similar to a soccer ball. As Koutarou instinctively picked it up, a girl wearing what appeared to be a sports outfit came chasing after the ball.

“Is this yours?”

”Thank you. 'My, a bouquet? Are you going on a date?'”

Surprisingly, the girl spoke the password. It seemed like she was part of the town's Elfaria faction. Koutarou was somewhat confused as this active girl didn't fit the image of being a member of an underground organization, but someone doing sports probably wouldn't be suspected in the park. Pulling himself back together, Koutarou gave her the answer he had been provided with.

“'That was my intention, but it seems like I've been stood up. I'd be happy if you'd take these off my hand'”

“Ahh... I wish someone would say that to me outside of work”

“I do too”

”Ahaha, welcome to the Goltrack branch”

After confirming the password, the girl showed a welcoming smile. However, Koutarou was still on guard, he wanted an insurance that she was really on his side. Theia's life was on stake after all.

“I know this is sudden, but has my friends left a message for me?”

“Ah yes, just wait a moment”

Adhering to Koutarou's request, the girl pulled out a small piece of paper from her pocket. She then began reading what was written on it.

“Uhm... 'Atlas, Caucasus, Hercules. Kabutonga charge-up' is what it says. What does that mean?”

“It's the sign that they're safe”

After hearing the girl read the text, Koutarou finally let his guard down. The text the girl had read up was one of the codes that they had decided on beforehand. That was a sign that they were safe and that the person in front of him was worthy of trust.

While it was very regrettable, the people in the Elfaria faction couldn't always be trusted. There was always a chance that their family had been taken hostage. There was also a scenario where the enemy had gotten ahead of an ally, and taken their place. In that case, Koutarou and the others would need signs to let each other know if the Elfaria faction people supporting them could be trusted in the case that they were separated. That was the purpose of the code. This was Kiriha's idea, just in case.

If the Elfaria faction person supporting Koutarou and the others knew of the code they had decided between themselves, they were most likely trustable. The contents of the code that the girl had just spoken told them that Theia and the others were doing fine. And since the girl had been the one to speak it, it meant that she was connected to the people by O-hime. In other words, the chances of the method of contact had been leaked and an enemy had taken the place was very small. That was the reason for Koutarou's relaxed guard.

Part 3

Having safely met up with the local Elfaria faction, Koutarou met up with Theia and Yurika and headed to the secret base. Though it was a secret base, being in the middle of a town, it wasn't all that large. It was not much larger than an office, and barely had any resemblance of a base. The people inside numbered less than ten. It was a plain atmosphere, perfectly

fitting the title of branch.

“I'm sorry for it being such a shabby place. I just wish I could have invited you somewhere more comfortable”

The elderly person serving as the head of the branch was aware that this place was not all that good. He especially felt that it was extremely improper for a princess of Forthorthe to be welcomed into.

“It's fine. We are the ones that disregarded your circumstances to come here. Besides, we've been pursued in a forest for several days. Just having a roof over our head is a big improvement”

Theia on the other hand didn't seem to mind, and in fact seemed happy. Looking at her profile, he knew exactly what she was thinking about.

That face... she's definitely comparing this to that movie she saw the other day...

The war movie about a resistance that they had watched the other day had a base that had an atmosphere just like this. Koutarou's intuition told him that Theia was thinking back to that. In fact, Theia gave the entire room a look around before glancing at Koutarou momentarily. She simply couldn't say it out loud because of the situation and her status.

“I am so happy to hear you say that”

The branch chief seemed to think of Theia's words as a sign of her generosity or kindness, and let out a smile of relief. In the end, there were no problem.

If anything's a problem it's...

Koutarou was more concerned about Yurika than Theia. Having been under a lot of pressure for the past few days, her constant use of magic for several days had finally caused her to reach her limit when she entered this room, and she passed out. She was currently sleeping on a sofa in the corner of the room.

Sleep well, Yurika. You did good...

Koutarou imagined that these past few days must have been really hard, mentally, on Yurika as her personality was far from suitable for fighting. Yet, she had fulfilled her job of protecting Theia with magic until the end. There

was a lot to praise, and nothing to complain about. Koutarou felt like Yurika had earned her right to sleep.

“That aside, let's move on to the main topic”

”You're right, there's no time to spare”

While Koutarou was looking at Yurika, Theia and the branch chief had finished their greetings and moved on to a new topic.

“This is the fifth day since we landed down in the forest. I want to know what happened during that time”

It had been five days since Koutarou and the others had been separated from O-hime and landed in one of the forests of Alaia. From that point until today, they had been isolated from society. That's why they needed to know what had happened while they were gone before doing anything else.

“... Starting from the conclusion, war has already started”

The branch chief answered in a solemn tone. Very few people could be happy about war starting in their own country. Theia of course felt that same and she kicked away the chair she was sitting on and slammed her hands onto the table.

“Is that true!? Tell me the details!!”

”Of course, actually—”

The branch chief began speaking on Theia's behest, and explained what had happened since the day Koutarou and the others landed in the forest.

Part 4

At first, O-hime's descent to Alaia was handled as an illegal alien's ship, despite Lord Bandarion hearing from Elexis that Elfaria was onboard. Since this was their chance to capture Elfaria, Lord Bandarion had kept that a secret even from his allies, just so he could get a better position later on. However the situation changed when the army let O-hime escape. Lord Bandarion announced that Elfaria had escaped pursuit from the imperial

army and returned home, and he ordered the Elfaria faction to surrender and hand over Elfaria.

As Elfaria had already been accused for embezzling a large amount of public funds and of several murders, the Elfaria faction would normally have no choice but to accept their demands. However, Lord Pardomshiha who led the Elfaria faction bravely refused those demands. He claimed that he wouldn't hand over the empress knowing that she would be framed with false evidence. In other words, he indirectly pointed out that the crimes were actually committed by top brass in the military.

With that, the public opinion was split into those who supported Elfaria, those who supported the military and those who held onto their judgment in a ratio of 4:4:2. Those who held onto judgment believed that right and wrong should be determined in court. Thus the public opinion put Elfaria in a slight disadvantage.

With the public opinion behind them, the army branded the Elfaria faction as an anti-government organization and as terrorists for sheltering Elfaria and obstructing justice, and they began taking military action. The public opinion on using military force was negative, but passively supported it as they felt it was unavoidable in order to get a trial. With that, everything played out as Lord Bandarion had planned.

Part 5

As the branch chief explained, Theia's expression gradually grew more grim. That was only obvious as her mother was being framed for crimes she hadn't committed, chased off of her throne and was about to have her beloved country of Forthorthe stolen by a villain. By the time the explanation was over, Theia was enraged.

“Curse you, Bandarion! I won't let you do as you please, you bastard!”

Having no place to take out her anger, she slammed her fist into the desk. While her body was small, her punch packed a lot of punch and the table bounced up and down, almost as if it had been surprised.

“P-Please calm down, Your Highness!”

“How could I calm down!?”

Being as enraged as she was, Theia lost sight of herself as she shouted. The voice of the elderly person serving as branch chief didn't reach her ears. Her boiling rage practically threatened to burn down her surroundings.

“Your Highness! Please calm your anger!”

”Do you know how I felt when I protected Forthorthe for so long! And—”

“Calm down, Theia!”

Thud.

What returned Theia to herself was Koutarou's fist hitting her head.

“Ow!?”

The intense impact momentarily extinguished Theia's rage.

“Don't take it out on the branch chief!! Who is your enemy!?”

”Shut up, shut up, you don't even know anything!!”

However, the flames of rage that had been extinguished quickly flared back up. Half of them were now aimed at Koutarou, and Theia's fist was thrust towards Koutarou's cheek.

Koutarou didn't try avoiding the fist as it hit him flat on. Without taking a single step back he stared right at Theia.

“... Are you seriously saying that, Theia?”

Koutarou's next words greatly shook Theia's mind. Thanks to that, she was able to calm down just a little.

“Ah...”

Having calmed down, Theia felt warmth past her cheek. She also recalled what the owner that warmth meant to Forthorthe. There was no way he wouldn't know anything. If anything, he was involved as Theia, if not more so.

“I'm sorry, Koutarou. I formally apologize for my violent language. I'm also sorry for hitting you in my outburst”

Theia finally regained full control of her heart. She also felt embarrassed due to how foolish she had behaved. This failure wasn't something she could cover up with a smile.

“It's fine, I know how you feel. Besides... thinking about it, it's my fault for not settling it properly in the first place. In this case, you have the right to complain about me”

Koutarou smiled wryly. Because Koutarou had been unable to settle the score with Maxfern, the magical kingdom of Folsaria and the People of the Earth had been born. Having obtained the power of both, Lord Bandarion was doing as he pleased, and that gain in power was Koutarou's responsibility. He also had a responsibility after abandoning Forthorthe to return home 2,000 years ago. That's why Koutarou felt like he couldn't blame Theia.

“You idiot, how could I rely on you that much! The Mastir family won't be protected by you forever!”

“... As you wish, My Princess”

“Grr... you are as inflexible as always!”

As a girl, Theia simply wanted to be scolded by the boy she got along with, but Koutarou never forgot about his position, and continued his act as a protector. Theia felt frustration as the girl within her felt sad, but the princess felt happy.

“Make sure you apologize to the branch chief”

“I know!”

Confirming that Theia was back to normal, Koutarou turned his back on her and approached Yurika. With her back in shape, the only worry he had left was Yurika. Seeing him off with dissatisfaction, Theia took a deep breath and faced the branch chief once more.

“... I'm sorry for getting upset. It was a mistake born from my inexperience”

”No, Your Highness is only human, you can't be perfect all the time”

”I appreciate you saying that”

”And as a citizen, it is so reassuring to see you get so angry for the people”

Fortunately, the branch chief wasn't angry. He was well aware that Theia's anger was for her country, Elfaria and the citizens. While he might have been surprised, he truly felt reassured like he had said.

“More importantly, Your Highness, what house is that knight from?”

“You mean Koutarou? Is there something on your mind about him?”

“That type of knight is unusual in this day and age... excuse my impoliteness, but there can't be many knights that would righten the wrongs of a princess right before them in this era. That was what caught my interest”

As far as the branch chief was aware, there weren't many that would scold royalty when they made a mistake. Even five might be a stretch. Lord Pardomshiha was famous for it, and Lord Wenranka might stake his life on it if need be. A few others also came to mind, but none of them were allies in the present situation.

In that case, it would be logical that the knight who scolded Theia, Koutarou, was part of the Pardomshiha or Wenranka band of knights, but the crests on the two swords on his waist didn't match either band. That's why the branch chief was curious about who the knight was.

“Right!? You'd think so!”

The branch chief's question made Theia's eyes sparkle, and she showed a very happy smile. It was as if she herself was being praised.

“He is a knight of knights to a fault! He is an absolute protector of the royal family, and a model knight, but because of that there are times when he won't listen to me! He is a very troublesome man!!”

Theia began explaining what kind of man Koutarou was with large, exaggerated gestures. Once more it was as if she was boasting of herself.

“That makes him even more interesting. If it's not too much to ask for, what house is from?”

“Sadly, I can't tell you yet. He's a man in a difficult position, so I can't reveal his origin yet. I am intending on revealing it later when an opportunity appears though”

Revealing that Koutarou was a descendant of survivors of Forthorthians

who survived on Earth, and that he was the Blue Knight himself would send major quakes throughout Forthorthe. That wasn't something that should be done in the middle of a coup d'etat, in fact revealing that then would only bring doubts to any credibility they had. If they were to announce it, Lord Bandarion would need to be defeated and the coup d'etat stopped.

“Is that so. Then I will look forward to when the time comes”

The branch chief was interested in Koutarou's identity, but since the princess was saying that she couldn't tell, he didn't pursue the matter any further. Besides, he had already heard about half of what he wanted to know.

“Fufu, I'm sure you'll be so surprised your eyes will shoot out from your head”

“My, then I fear that my old heart might stop”

”You would do well to prepare a resuscitation kit kit. Fufufu”

”Ahaha, I'll do just that”

The branch chief could imagine that Koutarou was a knight with a very special background after seeing a glimpse of his relationship with Theia, and from the fact that the swords on his swords had Alaia's crest and Theia's crest. He was probably the person Theia loved. So if the branch chief only waited until their wedding, he would automatically figure out who Koutarou was. The riddle would solve itself even if he didn't rush it.

Part 6

Koutarou and the others were able to get in touch with their friends on O-hime some time after they had arrived at the secret base. An email aside, speaking directly, face to face, would require various safety measures. Because of that, they would talk right away.

“Ruth, how have you been doing?”

”Your Highness! Master!”

The first one to appear was Ruth. She had been with Theia for a long time and they were connected through a master and vassal bond, so her worries were more than just those of a childhood friend. As a result, the moment she saw Theia safe, tears started falling.

“Is that something to cry about?”

Theia smiled at the hologram of Ruth. As the hologram was very precise it showed every single tear staining her cheek.

“It is something to cry about! You are always so reckless!”

“I'm sorry for worrying you, Ruth”

Theia had been told that O-hime had safely arrived beforehand, so she didn't cry as Ruth did. However, seeing the face of her safe childhood friend, Theia felt deep relief. That's why she honestly apologized for causing Ruth to worry.

“I am glad you are safe, Your Highness”

Having calmed down a little, the hologram of Ruth wiped away her tears and smiled. As she removed her hand from her face, Ruth's glance shifted off of Theia for a short moment.

“... Come on, get closer”

”Oh?”

Detecting Ruth's minor movements, Theia pulled on Koutarou's arm and had him stand by the communication device. Now both Theia's and Koutarou's faces should be displayed over at Ruth's side.

“Go on, you say something too”

”Me too?”

Since Ruth seemed to be thinking about Koutarou, Theia wanted them to speak. However, Koutarou felt tightly squeezed having to have two people standing in front of the communications device, and since it was an emergency he wanted to leave the talking to Theia. Because of that, a face practically saying 'Why?' stared at Theia.

“You fool!”

Thud.

“Ouch”

Irritated by Koutarou not understanding the female mind as always, Theia punished him with an iron fist.

“It's not like I'm telling you to casually chat with her! Just show her your energetic face and let her hear your voice!”

”Okay, I get it. You don't have to get so mad”

Realizing that this was probably a problem derived from the female psychology, Koutarou decided to do what he was told. He sat down on the chair in place of Theia and began talking to the holographic Ruth.

“... I'm safe too. Are all of you doing okay, Ruth-san?”

”Yes, Master. Everyone is full of spirit”

”Well, I'd be worried about that too”

”My... fufufu”

A bright smile appeared on Ruth's face. While she might have heard that he was fine, it didn't feel right until she saw his face. It was at this point that Ruth was able to accept that Koutarou was safe.

“Good, that's more like it”

Theia embraced Koutarou from behind and rested her head on his shoulder. She looked like Sanae always did. That was when Sanae's voice came from outside of the projected area.

“Koutarou, Koutarou, look! I caught a strange lizard!”

“Kyaa!?”

A small, unfamiliar reptilian was thrust out before Ruth's nose. Surprised by the sudden event, Ruth leaned back and Sanae entered the holograms projected area.

“Isn't it amazing!?”

””That's a big one, where did you catch it?”

“In the forest outside. There were a bunch of strange ones, but this was the strangest so I caught it”

”I want to see it when I get over there, so make sure you feed it”

”Okay!”

“Gugyaa”

With Sanae's energetic reply and the lizard's cry as their last words, Sanae left the projected area. To replace her were Maki and Nana. The girls from the O-hime side were planning on showing their energetic selves to Koutarou and the others a couple at a time.

“Satomi-kun, how is Yurika?”

”She's exhausted because she's been on edge the entire time and had to continuously use magic for a long time. She's sleeping over there right now”

“Satomi-san, can I get a look at Yurika if possible?”

Being Folsarians, the two were worried about Yurika. They had heard that she was safe, but she had been on their minds ever since they heard that she was asleep.

“Okay... Uhm”

Koutarou understood that the two were worried and wanted to show them Yurika. But not knowing how to operate the communications device, Koutarou stopped for a moment.

“Something like this should do it”

Sensing that Koutarou was having trouble, Theia stretched out her hands and helped him. As she did, an extra camera moved and started filming the sleeping Yurika.

“... Uehehehe, I won't give it to you, this is my baked potato...”

Yurika's mouth was half open, she had kicked away her blanket and was sleeping in a grand posture as she scratched her stomach. She was saying something, but her voice didn't reach the communications device. However, anyone seeing her could easily imagine what it was about.

“... Aaahh, uhm...”

”That's just like Yurika-chan”

Seeing Yurika like that, Maki and Nana smiled wryly. Having heard that she was asleep, they had truly been worried. But her actual appearance was completely different from what they had imagined, so the two weren't sure how to feel. It was clear to anyone that she was just asleep because of exhaustion, and there were no other problems.

“... Anyways, I'm glad to see Yurika-chan is safe too”

“Make sure you come back full of energy”

”Thank you. Be careful”

”I'll let Yurika know too”

Maki and Nana disappeared with a mysterious expression that wasn't quite a smile and wasn't quite a frown. Koutarou and Theia understood how they felt, and for some reason they felt sorry.

“Satomi-kun, Theiamillis-san”

Following Maki and Nana was Harumi.

“Sakuraba-senpai, long time no see”

”I heard that you were wandering a forest for days, were you okay?”

”Theia and I are at least confident in our stamina”

“... Koutarou, I'm confident in more than just my stamina”

”It's just a saying. It doesn't mean that you're ugly or that you're stupid”

“Then that's fine”

”Ahaha, I'm glad to see you are healthy”

“What about you, Sakuraba-senpai? I'm sure you're not used to this kind of life style”

To Koutarou, Harumi was probably the furthest away from fighting. When it came to personalities, Yurika was probably less suited, but when taking health and her lack of combat training, Harumi was the one he worried the most about.

“At times like these, Alaia-sama's memories are a big help”

”I see, no wonder you seem so calm”

But fortunately, Harumi had Alaia's memories. The memories of Alaia who had overcome times like these before came as a big help to Harumi.

“Why don't you calm down already”

“Those words seem almost spiteful!”

”Fufufu”

Harumi laughed happily as she listened to Koutarou's and Theia's back and forth before her hologram vanished. A seemingly ill-humored Clan appeared to take her place.

“... You left me behind right away, didn't you, Bertorion”

“What now, all of a sudden”

“Even though you said you needed me”

”This couldn't be helped”

”I'm sure you'll continue to say that it couldn't be helped from now on too”

Clan saw herself as Koutarou's partner, so she was upset to have been left behind. Her hologram was staring at him with a grudge in her glance. Seeing her like that, Theia smiled wryly.

“Clan, you're better off honestly confessing that you were worried. For your own sake”

”I—”

“You were worried, right?”

“That's not true at all!”

“That's a lie”

That was when Kiriha appeared next to Clan.

“Clan-dono has been restlessly walking back and forth around this

communications device these past few days. Just like Koutarou had done when Clan-dono was nowhere to be seen”

Kiriha revealed Clan's true intentions with her usual mischievous smile.

“Kii!? T-T-That's all a lie!!”

Clan complained to Kiriha her face dyed red.

“Really?”

“W-Weren't you always staring at that card of yours too!?”

“Oh... 'too' is it?”

“Ugh”

However, Kiriha was unfazed. She seemed to enjoy herself as she cornered Clan.

“That sounds about right. Koutarou, why don't you say something”

”That girl...”

For better or for worse, Koutarou understood Clan's feelings. He reluctantly broke the stalemate.

“Clan, I'm sorry for worrying you. Everyone's doing fine. I'll bring you with me next time, so cut me some slack”

“... It's a promise”

Clan showed a depressed expression as she left the projection area. However, her feelings weren't as gloomy as her expression. Her outburst towards Koutarou was because of her worry. Kiriha saw Clan off with a smile, and turned to Koutarou.

“By the way, aren't you going to say something to me?”

This time, Kiriha's mischievousness turned towards Koutarou. In the past, Kiriha had said that she would live together with Koutarou. So she too was dissatisfied by having been left behind.

“You want me to say that here and now?”

However, Koutarou knew that Kiriha's mischievousness was ineffective at truly important times. That's why this was just for show and it was just her way of saying that she was happy they were safe. So Koutarou returned her smile without being shaken.

“No, let's save it when it's just the two of us”

“Then I'll save it for later”

“Yeah”

In the end, Koutarou was right, and Kiriha disappeared without much of a fuss. But at the same time, that was a show of her intention to eventually act like a spoilt child and to tease him. That scared Koutarou a little.

“Listen to this, Theia-chan, Satomi-kun!”

That was when Shizuka arrived. For some reason she was on the verge of tears and she looked at Theia and Koutarou with moist eyes.

“Long time no see, landlord-san”

”What happened?”

”When I was helping out by carrying luggage I stepped through a floor board!”

Shizuka's weight was the reason behind her tears. As they were reentering the atmosphere Alunaya had used up a lot of magical power and Shizuka now weighed past 150 kilos. Since she wouldn't be found out unless she stood on a scale, she didn't mind too much this time either, but there was a pitfall. A tragedy occurred as the wood used as a floorboard couldn't withstand the combined weight of her and the luggage, and she fell down to the next floor.

“Ever since then, everyone on this base seems to think I'm a heavy woman~”

Everyone else that was carrying luggage had been fine, and only Shizuka had fallen. When they helped her back up she had been heavy too. So because of that, rumors about her weight began being spread. Rumors of a girl who weighed 100 times more than she looked. To Shizuka, that situation was like a nightmare.

“I can't get married anymoreeee!!”

”Now, now, calm down landlord-san. It's not like you really are heavy”

”The people here don't know thatttt!! I just want to die!!”

”Well, the other party will always have their own ideal weight”

”I told her the same thing but... she's been like this ever since”

“I don't want to be popular with Uncle and your kind!”

”Aha, ahahaha”

Koutarou found himself unable to do anything but cover it up with a fake laugh. He had spent over a year and learned that women are extremely dangerous creatures when they are like this.

“Now that this has happened, you'll have to take me as your bride, Satomi-kun!!”

”You don't have to worry, everything will be fine when you return to Earth, landlord-san”

“Really?”

”Yeah”

”Will you look after me if it's no good?”

”If you're fine with that”

”Okay, then it's a promise”

“Yeah”

With that, Shizuka was finally able to regain her cool. Meanwhile, Koutarou let out a sigh of relief. He wanted her to always been bright and cheerful.

“Well then, make sure you get over here quick, okay? Everyone's waiting”

”Yeah, see you later”

”See you”

Shizuka left the communications device with a smile. After seeing her off, Theia silently stared at Koutarou's face.

“...”

“What?”

“No, it's nothing”

If Shizuka were to intentionally keep other men away when she returned to Earth, just what would happen?

Theia had noticed that the promise Koutarou and Shizuka had so casually made was very meaningful, but she didn't try to let Koutarou know, since it wasn't something that anyone would lose anything on.

“Theia, Reios-sama”

“Finally, the last one to appear was Theia's mother, Elfaria. In her case she didn't just want to rejoice in their reunion, but also to discuss the future. That was why she had come at this timing.

“Mother! It's been so long!”

”I'm glad you're safe too, Elle. So this is to the point, but... are you okay?”

Leaving the greetings short, Koutarou got down to business. The bright expression on his face he had shown when talking to the girls vanished. He now had the expression of the legendary hero, the Blue Knight.

I tried my best to keep him from showing this kind of expression... in that case...!

Elfaria's expression also returned to that of an empress, and began explaining the situation at Koutarou's behest. They needed to resolve this problem as quickly as possible.

“Sadly, the situation is not something you can call okay. I'm not losing when it comes to support, but because of those who are indecisive, there are more voices in support of the military's actions”

Koutarou had been told about this part as well. It was included in what he heard from the elderly branch chief. The Elfaria faction and the military had a practically equal support. However as those who are undecided believe that this should resolved in court. As a result, as the Elfaria faction doesn't want the matter to go to trial were at a disadvantage.

“If we go to court, I will lose because of false evidence. If we don't, the military's use of force will be justified”

“There are already skirmishes breaking out in various places”

The military had taken action after forging sufficient evidence. Because of that, the military was practically guaranteed a victory in a trial. The military had created a scenario where Elfaria couldn't go to court just so they could attack. Everything was going as they had planned. Battles had broken out all over. These places are mostly outside of the main solar system where the military has a small presence, but there were even a few in the Forthorthe solar system as well. Amongst the planets, Alaia had the most resistance.

“I think you said you had something you could do if you returned here?”

“Yes. This is where the military made the evidence that keeps me from trial. Since I've got a lead on that, we'll bring it all down”

“But won't they be on guard for that?”

”They should. They'll probably go on a large offensive to seal our movements. We need to appeal to the citizens and gather support to stop the military from doing that”

In the past when Elfaria had been captured, the military had fallen into confusion. They couldn't manage military gains as large as Elfaria. During that time, the Elfaria faction had gathered information, some of which contained fragments of the military's forging of evidence. The Elfaria faction was analyzing that information and slowly but surely got closer to the truth. However, the military would surely send in their forces before the Elfaria faction had any clear evidence.

In other to counteract that, Elfaria needed to return home. By having Elfaria herself appeal to the citizens and gathering support, they could restrain the military's movements. By doing that, they would make the confrontation between them and the military, who insisted that their cause was valid, clear, and they would probably get more allies, and more time to reach the core of the conspiracy. That was something Elfaria wouldn't be able to do from Earth.

“I will probably hold a speech to the citizens before long. We're currently making preparations for that”

”That's a difficult fight. Thinking back to it, the fight against Maxfern was simple. He was an easy to understand villain”

Koutarou crossed his arms and went deep into thought. In the battle 2,000 years ago, had staged a coup d'etat that anyone could understand. That's why if Maxfern was defeated, the problem would be resolved. However, this battle was different. It was a coup d'etat silently making progress under the surface, and the citizens didn't know who the mastermind was. Nothing would resolve from just defeating Bandarion. It was a battle completely different from the past.

“Reios-sama only needed to be a hero after all”

”This time I'm only a stagehand... Leave Theia to me. I'll bring her over to you safely”

”Please do”

Elfaria's Achilles' heel was her daughter, Theia. Elfaria had challenged it all with indomitable resolve, but if her daughter's life was in danger, she didn't know if she could make calm judgments. Whether Koutarou could protect Theia or not would greatly affect the outcome.

“And what happens when I get over there?”

“Most likely, it will turn into a showdown with the imperial army sent by Lord Bandarion”

The best means of victory for the Bandarion side was most likely to suppress Elfaria before she could appeal to the people. Even if they couldn't stop Elfaria's speech, it would still take some time before the public opinion shifted and the band of knights turned to Elfaria's side. If they settled it before then, the results would be the same. Lord Bandarion would surely go on the offensive.

“... Okay. Have everyone over there prepare for that as well”

His resolution weighed heavy on Koutarou as he spoke those words. He was telling the people he wanted as far away from battle as possible to get ready to fight. Ultimately, that was the best way to secure the peace for all of them, but despite knowing that, it wouldn't work as an excuse. Koutarou would use the girls' lives in order to win this battle. Koutarou felt it would be necessary to take responsibility for that after everything was over.

That was when Theia, clinging onto Koutarou from behind, increased the strength of her embrace, and she whispered into Koutarou's ears.

“Mother and I will share that responsibility. You don't need to carry it alone”

Theia's whispers were filled with an adamant will and deep kindness.

They would be together, win or lose.

That was what Theia had steeled herself for.

“... Yeah, you're right”

And Koutarou resolved himself as well, to win this battle alongside Theia, Elfaria and his many friends.

Part 7

Elfaria's story moved on from that to a more practical one. With that, Theia and the branch chief were more useful. They went on how to safely transport Theia and the likes. Apart from battles and rough strategy, Koutarou wasn't all that knowledgeable of modern Forthorthe's situation. Apart from answering questions coming his way, all he did was listen to the discussion and take care of the sleeping Yurika.

“Uefuefuefue~”

”... You know, you're accompanying a princess, so could you keep it together a little more...”

Koutarou wiped Yurika's mouth with a handkerchief. She seemed to be having a dream about food, and based on Koutarou's experience she would demand something to eat when waking up. So he had already prepared food and a bottle and left them at her bedside. This was a form of care that only Koutarou, who knew everything about Yurika, could do.

“Mother, we're already resupplied, so wouldn't it be best to head your way on our own strength? If we attach a guard, the forces here will decrease”

“Theia, I know how you feel... but it will be dangerous if Bandarion finds out that you're travelling on your own. You three alone will stand out too much. So if a fight breaks out, there will be no point in not having a guard”

“Princess, please use our vehicle. I believe that would be the best for everyone”

“... Okay, we'll do just that”

It was decided that Koutarou and the others would use a vehicle prepared by the Elfaria faction to group up with the rest from O-hime. Koutarou's armor and Theia's Combat Dress had already been resupplied, so it was possible for them to move on their own, but from a wider point of view, it was decided that the Elfaria faction people would help them. One\s movement becoming a problem was one of many difficulties in a war.

“Phuee... Sha...tomi-shan...?”

“Oh, you awake, Yurika?”

“Huh? This is...?”

As the discussion was reaching its end, Yurika who had been asleep ever since reaching the branch office finally woke up. Having been asleep, she had no understanding of the situation, and she looked at her surroundings in confusion.

“This is one of the Elfaria faction's bases. You collapsed out of relief when you stepped foot in her. Remember?”

“Uhm... ah, I think I remember something like that happening”

Koutarou's words helped clear up Yurika's foggy memories and got her mind running. She barely had her memories of getting to the place. With her head working again, she remembered that she had one thing she was worried about.

“Satomi-san, is everyone okay!?”

“Relax, we got in touch with the others. They're safe”

”Really?”

“Look over there, Theia is talking to her mom, right?”

“Ah, thank god~”

Yurika had always been worried about the others. That's why just hearing that they were fine wasn't enough to allow her to rejoice right away, but seeing Theia and Elfaria speaking let her get an actual feel for it. Thanks to that, Yurika let out a sigh of relief and her usual smile appeared.

Grrr.

At the same time, it seemed Yurika's stomach required relief as well.

“Ehe, ehehehehe”

“You're the same old Yurika no matter where you go. Go on, eat”

”Thank you very much, ehehehe”

Even Yurika felt embarrassed by having her stomach growl at this timing, so

she tried to laugh it off after receiving the food from Koutarou. However, unable to resist the temptation of food, she began eating before long.

“Thank you for the food! Munch”

Bang.

”Grandpa!”

Just as Yurika took a bit of the Forthorthe-style sandwich, the door to the secret base swung open and a girl jumped in. It was the girl that head guided Koutarou and the others here.

“Hmgh!? Mnnmnm!!”

Surprised, Yurika choked on the sandwich and began struggling.

“Here, drink this”

But Koutarou was used to it. He felt like she was going to choke on her food, so he didn't panic and simply handed her the drink already in his hand.

“Gulp gulp... Ahh~ I thought I was going to die~”

Thanks to that, everything was resolved without trouble. As Yurika got back to her food, she began watching the girl that had just jumped in. Koutarou did the same.

“This is terrible, uncle!!”

“Settle down. You are before Her Majesty and Her Highness”

”B-But it's really important!”

”It's fine, speak”

Normally a greeting to Theia and Elfaria would be required. The girl being the granddaughter of the branch chief meant that she had been properly taught manners. Yet there was a situation so urgent that the girl had forgotten her greetings. Theia sensed that this was something important, and urged her on, skipping over the usual procedures.

“The imperial army, I mean the coup d'etat army are apparently transporting weapons using a trailer! They seem to be weapons to fight against us, but

they haven't been assembled yet! We got a message from the other branches that we should attack the trailer now!”

The girl had come with information about the coup d'etat army's new weapon. A secretly developed mobile weapon that was being carried in block components to be assembled in secret and used for a surprise attack on the Elfaria faction's base. It was a good thing the Elfaria faction found out, or they would have found themselves ambushed by a new weapon.

“Theia!”

”It's possible! If we don't make the first move, something terrible will happen!”

Hearing the words new weapon, Elexis was the first person to pop up in Koutarou's and Theia's minds.

If it's that Warlord and improved Motor Knights... the Elfaria faction will be destroyed if they're not prepared!

The mobile weapons made by Elexis had put Koutarou and the others in danger several times. Just having those alone on the battlefield was dangerous, but Elexis now had access to magic and spiritual energy technology. Who knew what kind of improvements could be made to the machines. Just thinking about it made chills run down their spines.

“Mother, it's DKI's new weapon! We have to attack now! It will be dangerous to leave them alone!”

”DKI... I understand, let's send out soldiers”

“Koutarou and I will go too!”

”Wait, Theia. You come over here as planned”

”But!”

”If they're still disassembled then there's no reason for you two to go. In fact, it might even be a trap to lure you in”

“But we're going up against—”

”Please calm down,. Princess Theiamillis. Her Majesty is correct”

“Koutarou...”

With Koutarou speaking formally, Theia calmed down a little. She couldn't disregard the judgement of the Blue Knight. Koutarou walked up to Theia and began explaining the reason for his judgement.

“The timing is too good. It's information that leaked while we still haven't been caught”

Koutarou and Elfaria both feared that this was a trap to capture the three that had descended to the forest. Whether the Bandarion side knew if Theia was included in the three, they should at least know that they were important allies to her. In other words, they were strong cards to play against Elfaria and Theia if they could be captured. With that in mind, there was a decent chance of the rumors of a weapons transport being a trap. With Koutarou and the others being exceptionally strong, they might show up after hearing those rumors.

“A long range attack will do fine if it's just about attacking a transport trailer. If they could block that, then it would have been trap. In that case, I'll give the order to retreat right away”

It wasn't like they were attacking the military. They would simply attack a trailer disguised as a civilian vehicle carrying new weapons, so cannons, missiles or unmanned craft should be enough. If the trailer had prepared countermeasures for that, then there was a high chance of it being a trap, and a retreat order would be given. In Koutarou's mind, there was no need for them to go either way. If anything, them going would only increase the risk.

“... Okay. Koutarou, you are probably right. We should prioritize grouping up with Mother and the others”

Koutarou's thinking made sense, so Theia decided to hold in her urge to go herself, and meet up with Elfaria and the others. Koutarou smiled slightly, put his hand on Theia's shoulder and whispered so only she could hear.

“... I understand how you feel. You don't want to expose the soldiers, the citizens to danger, do you?”

”... Yeah”

“... Then let's hurry up to Elle's place. If not, Bandarion and the others will do stuff like this over and over”

If they got caught up on what was in front of them, the victims would only increase. If they didn't want the citizens to get hurt, they needed to leave this region as soon as they could.

“I'm sorry, I'm just a foolish princess who can only look at what's in front of her”

Having finally recollected herself thanks to Koutarou, Theia flashed a smile. It was an embarrassed and self-ridiculing smile. Seeing that smile, Koutarou moved away from Theia and his expression returned to that of the Blue Knight.

“It must be in the blood. The people of the Mastir family have been like that since long ago”

Alaia, Charl, Elfaria, Theia. As far as Koutarou knew, all of them desperately thought of how to protect the citizens. They also shed tears when facing citizens they couldn't save.

“But, that is why us knights can take pride in being vassals of the Mastir family. I'm sure the citizens feel the same way”

Because these royals felt for the lives of each and every one of their citizens, there was meaning in staking their lives to protect them. So many citizens rose to protect them 2,000 years ago because of that. Both knights and commoners were the same in that regard. Koutarou believed that the same would hold true today too.

“Thank you, Koutarou”

“You should tell your citizens that once this is over”

“You're right”

Theia's smile changed into something as beautiful as a flower. So beautiful to the point that all Elfaria faction members in the branch were happy to be the vassals of this princess.

Just who is this youth? Just what kind of experience does one have to go through to turn into as splendid a knight as this?

At the same time, everyone wondered who the knight, that protected the princess both physically and mentally, really was.

Bitter Enemies in the Same Boat

Part 1

Wednesday, November 24

It seemed that the trailer carrying the disassembled new weapons was passing through the region where Koutarou and the others were as they headed towards a large city. As the Elfaria faction had a military base in that city, it was believed that the aim was to launch a surprise attack on that.

“Why don't they just directly bomb it from the air?”

”It's too close to the urban area. An attack from bombers or battleships would cause a lot of civilian casualties if they didn't announce it beforehand”

”So if they announce it beforehand the people at the base would have time to prepare. But that said, if they didn't announce it, the public opinion would inevitably oppose it”

“That's right. Also, if there are civilian casualties, that would mean that there was an attack on the urban area, which is a violation of the galactic treaty's codes of conduct”

“So they'll lose their ability to claim that they are in the right”

“If a little more time passed and they gained complete control of the media they might bomb without any hesitation, but that's not realistic right now”

”I see, so that's why they'll attack with the newly developed mobile weapons”

Koutarou and the others were travelling with the squad that would attack the trailer. The attack would be performed by a force gathered from the area. As their path was the same for some of the way, they ended up

travelling together.

“Which means that you were doing some sketchy stuff in the past”

”What sketchy stuff?”

”You tried to blow up Corona House with the Blue Knight when we just met, remember?”

”You also shot Maki-chan with a laser cannon~”

”Shh, shh! Shut up, that was just youthful folly!”

Koutarou and the others were using a transport truck to move around. While it was a truck, it was different from that of one from Earth, it had no tires and instead it floated through the air. Because of that, there was practically no sound when it was running and it didn't get in the way of discussions inside the truck.

“You better thank Ruth-san for stopping you”

”I already have! Now let's stop talking about when I was stupid!”

”Ahahaha... by the way, when are we getting to everyone else?”

”Hm? Uhm, the distance is about twice of that that we walked across the forest, but I doubt it will take more than two hours”

The distance was about 200 kilometers, roughly twice the distance they walked through the forest. If the truck they were on moved at full speed, they would arrive within the hour. However, since they didn't want to stand out, they were travelling at the same speed as commercial vehicles, so two hours was the estimated time it would take.

“So twice of that would only take two hours... now I feel kind of sad”

”That's just how it is. Her Majesty Alaia's travel would be over in an instant with vehicles of this age”

”The concept of travel has changed after all”

The planet Alaia was still under continued development, and its population wasn't all that much. Because of that, there was desolate wilderness and vast forest between the towns. The truck Koutarou and the others were in was practically sliding over a thin road between the towns. Compared to the

forest, the time it would take wasn't all that long, and it was very calm. It was only natural for Yurika to feel sad.

Part 2

After travelling for roughly an hour, the truck carrying the three of them stopped by the side of the road. There was a fork in the road here. It was here that Koutarou and the others would part with the soldiers from the Elfaria faction.

“Everyone, return safely...”

Theia stepped outside the car and saw the truck carrying the soldiers off. The truth was that she wanted to go with them and fight. But she had reasons not to. Not being able to win by individual combat was what war was.

“... Koutarou. Would Her Majesty Alaia worry at times like these too?”

How did the legendary empress overcome that impatient desire. There was someone next to Theia that had the answer to that.

“You already know the answer to that, don't you?”

“I want to hear it from your mouth. From your mouth as you've actually seen and heard her”

“... In battle, soldiers die. The people suffer. If Mafxern wanted to establish a good government, Her Majesty Alaia's desire for justice might just be self-righteousness. Thinking like that, she considered not raising any soldiers”

Koutarou could clearly remember the night of the harvest festival 2,000 years ago. Alaia wanted to give up on the subjugation of Maxfern for the sake of the citizens. To her, Maxfern was clearly an enemy. He had killed her parents and was trying to take over the country. But even then, she believed that it might be best for the citizens not to fight Maxfern.

“But in the end, she decided to fight. She understood that the citizens wouldn't be happy if she left Maxfern alone”

The meaning of someone who loves peace like Alaia to decide to go to war was heavy. Maxfern needed to be slain even if that meant forcing hardship onto the citizens for a while. Because Maxfern wasn't intending on creating a good government.

“Thanks to that, we have the current Forthorthe. This country's long history and traditions are thanks to Her Majesty deciding to fight back then”

”Hmm... I see”

It was something she already knew. But hearing it from Koutarou, she was able to renew her feelings. It was hard to imagine that Bandarion would establish a good government after going this far. They were in a situation where they had to fight.

“... Soldiers fighting alongside me... I wish you good luck...”

Even then, her feeling of impatience didn't go away. If it did, it would be the start of a tyrant. That's why Theia would fight even with these complex emotions, believing that the results would lead to a bright future.

Part 3

Koutarou and the others had temporarily stop to allow for the scout to go up ahead. As they were away from their many allies, they needed to stay on guard. Because of that, Koutarou and the others didn't start moving until a few minutes after the soldiers attacking the trailer had left.

While a scout had been sent up ahead, they were already in Pardomshiha territory, so chances of a sudden attack wasn't all that high. The chances of the enemy having any information that Theia was here was also low. It was something done just in case. Because of that, their travel was quiet as always.

However, that silence was broken by the soldier driving the truck.

“Your Highness, the scout has detected flying object approaching at high speeds! It's coming from our 11:30 direction!”

The soldier's voice was full of tension. As this was a mission regarding a princess, he took someone approaching far more seriously.

“What kind of object!? An enemy!?”

”I don't know! There's no mistaking there being a flying object, but the sensors can't distinguish it! It could just be a big bird, or it could be a small stealth craft, anyways it's not a normal weapon!”

The scout that had been sent up ahead sent a warning. The sensors of the small car the scout was in had detected a flying object approaching. However, the target was small, and he was unable to get a detailed analysis. At best, he could use the data he had to determine that it was larger than a meter, but smaller than two.

“Koutarou!”

“... From this feeling, it's probably a human! I can sense willpower!”

Though there was still some distance between them, Koutarou could sense that the approaching object was human. He had spiritual powers that he got from Sanae, and those powers let Koutarou sense the aura of the flying object.

“Is it an enemy!?”

”I can't tell. There's precaution and haste... but no clear hostility. It might be a scout from their side”

Koutarou couldn't distinguish if the approaching human was friend or foe. If it was someone that had been given an order to attack, he should be able to sense those intentions. However, there was no trace of that. In that regard, it was more likely to assume that it was a scout, rather than someone flying without an objective.

“... No, this is an enemy”

However, Koutarou's guess was swiftly shot down by Yurika's words.

“Darkness Rainbow is coming!”

Yurika could sense magical power from the approaching object. As Koutarou said that it was a human, that meant it must be a magical girl from Darkness Rainbow. And if that was the case, Yurika would have to fight.

Yurika's current expression, shine in her eyes and the condition of her voice were all that of a magical girl of love and courage.

“Please stop the truck!”

”What are you going to do!?”

“I'll intercept her! Based on the situation, they know our position!”

Yurika believed that the enemy already knew their rough position. She didn't know if that was because of simple information gathering or because of forecasting magic, but there was a high chance that magic was being used to fly towards them because their location was already known. It was hard to imagine that they were just flying around all over the place in hopes of finding leverage that can be used against Bandarion.

“Okay, stop the truck!”

”As you wish, My Princess!”

”I'm going!”

As the truck stopped, Yurika dashed out immediately. Her movements were so fast it was hard to imagine it was Yurika.

“Yurika, wait! Don't go alone!”

Koutarou quickly jumped out of the truck and chased after Yurika.

Geez, when it comes to magic, Yurika is always like this!

While Yurika was acting correctly as a magical girl, as a girl, she was incorrect. That's why Koutarou drew the two swords hanging off his waist in order to resolve the problem driving her to fight.

“Blast Fireball – Modifier – High Concentration”

By the Koutarou readied his swords Yurika was already in the middle of an incantation. She was casting an exploding fireball spell. This time she compressed its to its limit and turned it into a highly destructive attack spell. As this extremely hot fireball had quite the explosive force behind it, there was no need to score a direct hit. It was an effective spell against someone flying at high speeds.

“How does it look!?”

Finally, somewhat after the other two, came Theia. She had been delayed because she was attaching the weaponry to her Combat Dress. Her equipment this time was almost the exact same as Assault Red.

“We should be able to see her very soon. She'll come out from the curve up ahead”

Koutarou held his two swords, Theia pointed her large cannon forwards and Yurika's incantation was finished, and her spell was ready to fire. They had finished preparing for interception before the enemy arrived.

“Here she comes!”

Just after Koutarou raised his voice, someone appeared out of the trees about 200 meters in front of them. As expected, it was a magical girl.

“Rainbow!! I finally found you!!”

”Crimson-san!?”

The magical girl's identity was Dark Crimson. She had peculiar clothes colored dark red and flaming red hair. It was the crimson magician who had the highest attack power of all of Darkness Rainbow.

“Her, huh! No wonder she's coming from the front!”

”The most problematic ones here!”

As her specialty was simply attack magic, allowing her to get the first attack would cause serious damage. That's why Koutarou and the others decided to attack right away. They had to defeat her before she began her incantation.

“Wait, I have no intentions of fighting!! There's something I want to tell you!!”

However, Crimson did something surprising. The girl who claimed fighting was everything announced that she had no intentions of fighting, and threw away her cane. She then defensively approached with her hands in the air. She showed no signs of starting any incantations.

“Yurika, how does it look?”

“It doesn't look like she's intending to use magic...”

”She doesn't have any hostility now either. I don't know her real intentions, but it seems true that she has no intention to fight”

Koutarou confirmed that Crimson still wasn't showing any hostility, and returned his two swords to their sheaths. Theia followed Koutarou's judgment and lowered her weapons as well. Yurika continued pointing her cane towards Crimson for a while, but as Crimson showed no intentions of attacking, she eventually lowered her cane.

“You sure are suspicious, Rainbow!”

”I just can't imagine a reason for you not to fight”

”Well of course!”

With a wry smile, Crimson landed before Koutarou and the others. She still seemed to have no intentions of fighting and her hands were empty. Her cane was lying dozens of meters behind her.

“That's just how important this is!!”

Crimson began her explanation as she arrived. She didn't have much time. She always seemed to be enjoying herself, but now she seemed to be in a rush.

“Your friends are about to fall into a trap!! You should call them back right now!!”

”What!?”

Koutarou's eyes shot open wide in surprise. That was because, these weren't words an enemy would normally speak. Especially not someone who considered fighting everything.

“What do you mean!?”

Yurika's voice was stern. Like Koutarou, she was skeptic to Crimson's words.

“The imperial army aren't carrying mobile weapons, but a virus weapon! Bandarion is planning on having your allies destroy that!”

That was the reason Crimson was here. She had searched for Koutarou and the others in order to stop Bandarion's plans.

“You're being played by false information! The Elfaria faction will spread the virus weapon on their own, destroy the base and take down everyone in the surrounding area as well!”

Bandarion's plan was very systematic. When Alaia was first being developed there were a lot of anti-government forces with bases set up all over. They weren't in use any more, but when explored, weapons from that time would sometimes be discovered. One of the weapons discovered was a virus weapon. That was where Bandarion's plan began forming. In reality, there was no virus weapon discovered, as it was something Bandarion had brought in himself. Next he would give the order to 'dispose of the virus weapon discovered in a facility that can do so'. As they wouldn't want it stolen, they wouldn't report on the route they would use or the time schedule, as it would obviously be treated as confidential information. Using that, he then had information leaked that mobile weapons were being transported over multiple channels. He also imported a new mobile weapon to Alaia to give credibility to the information. However, what was in reality being transported was the virus weapon. As they had been transporting mobile weapons until arriving at Alaia, it would be difficult to see through the trap.

Getting ambushed by mobile weapons would be a problem, and attacking disassembled weapons being transported made a handy target. If left be, the Elfaria faction would end up attacking the trailer carrying the virus weapon and spreading it across the planet with their own hands. It was clear what would happen to the nearby bases and the neighbouring

regions.

“Of course, Bandarion will twist the truth to shift the public opinion in his favor!! The media will coincidentally be on place to take pictures!! This matter will reduce the Elfaria faction's a lot!!”

He would have the media report on the matter, and then thoroughly criticize them. The Elfaria faction will attack the trailer carrying a virus weapon meant to be disposed, and spreading it. They might have at least have some morals, but in the end the Elfaria faction was simply a terrorist faction. Criticizing them like that after causing so many casualties, nothing the Elfaria faction could say would work. 'This isn't terrorism, it's just a simple miss', who would follow an empress like that.

The Bandarion side was expecting Elfaria's next move. But before she could put that in motion, or maybe even after, this plan would greatly reduce her support. Since it wouldn't hurt even if the Elfaria faction didn't fall for the plan, there was no need to hesitate by putting it into action.

“... I understand what you're saying, but we can't just accept that at face value”

Yurika felt like Crimson was making sense. She couldn't deny the possibility that it was true. But even then, she couldn't believe it right away. Crimson was an enemy who travelled down a different path.

“I know that! That's why I came here!”

Crimson understood the circumstances regarding that as well. If their positions were reversed, she would obviously be suspicious. That's why Crimson earnestly tried to appeal to them.

“Think about it!! If I lose all enemies to fight, I would be troubled!!”

Crimson had come because she would be the most persuasive. To Crimson fighting was everything. Looking at that from the other side, she was the kind of person who would least want her enemies to be killed by plans or virus weapons.

It's her real intentions... she's not lying...

While he wasn't on Sanae's level, Koutarou could use his powers to read the feelings of others. His power told him that this girl wasn't lying. Since she hadn't use any magic apart from flying, she wasn't fooling them through

that either. Even without that, Koutarou believed that she was telling the truth.

“... I'll believe you. But, why is Elexis trying to stop it?”

But even then, Koutarou couldn't take the last step. That was because he didn't understand Elexis' intentions. While Crimson wasn't lying, Elexis had been the one that sent her. Since he was on Bandarion's side, it would be unnatural for him to take any actions that would help the Elfaria faction.

“Neither he nor any of us are trying to call ourselves good people! But even then, we wouldn't use any means necessary!”

Just like how Crimson wouldn't want to lose opponents worth fighting, Elexis had his circumstances for not wanting to cause a lot of casualties.

Elexis wanted to overthrow Elfaria because in his mind, Elfaria wouldn't create his ideal society. Elexis was someone who wanted to improve the world, and he had contributed a lot to society. Joining Bandarion's side was just a means to that end, it wasn't his goal. He had the ambition to eventually replace Bandarion and revolutionize Forthorthe.

As Elexis believed in that, he didn't want civilians to be sacrificed for no reason. Humans were necessary in his ideal society. In the sense of a businessman, it would be foolish to reduce the number of customers.

Elexis believed that sacrifice was necessary to change the world, and he wouldn't hesitate to sacrifice people if it really was necessary. But the sacrifices in this plan was not necessary. While it would be effective, but it was far too short-sighted and the cost was too high. Elexis hated the chaotic use of power. He wouldn't mind if it was for order, but he couldn't forgive it if it was for chaos.

“... Now that you mention it, he's got a strangely strong sense of obligation...”

Hearing Crimson's words, Koutarou remember what Elexis had done. When he had been fighting against Koutarou and the others, he had tried to limit the sacrifices as much as possible. He had also upheld his promise of giving Koutarou clothes, which he made in the middle of a battle. From that, Koutarou figured that while Elexis was evil, he had his own rules that he was following. Thinking about it that way, it wouldn't be too strange for Elexis to reveal this matter to Koutarou and the others.

“Besides, if Bandarion comes out victorious now, we'll have a bunch of troubles too. Because Elexis still hasn't finished putting himself in a seat of power, our plan of returning to this country as his cooperators will fall apart”

By cooperating with Bandarion, Elexis was planning on increasing his own influence. But if the outcome was determined here, Bandarion wouldn't need Elexis' cooperation. That meant that Elexis' chances of obtaining authority would diminish, and at the same time it meant that there was a much lower chance of the magical kingdom of Folsaria to return to the new Forthorthe as its partner. In short, this was an important moment where Elexis and Darkness Rainbow might lose their position. It was inevitable for them to request the cooperation of Koutarou and the others.

“What do you think, Koutarou?”

“... Let's believe her”

”Are you sure?”

”I think we can believe in that resolute side she's showed from time to time”

Ultimately, Koutarou decided to believe Crimson. Considering how they had behaved up until now, the chances of this being a trap was low. The risk was too high to ignore her warning, only for it to turn out to be true. They could believe her, and they couldn't afford not to. That was Koutarou's conclusion.

“If you say so, then I'll believe her too”

”I'm not satisfied, but I will do so too”

“That helps! Without your cooperation we have no way of stopping the Elfaria faction!!”

Crimson felt relief upon hearing Koutarou's answer. Her final reason for coming was that just spreading information wouldn't be enough to stop the Elfaria faction. In order to stop them, the information needed to reach someone in a relatively high position, and have that person give orders. In other words, they had no choice but to get into contact with Koutarou and the others who would believe them and who had a high status.

Part 4

Being cautious of the imperial faction, and in order to stop the planned surprise attack, the Elfaria faction was going to make the first move and launch their own surprise attack. In order to keep the opponent from noticing that, they operated under radio silence. Because of that, even if they were called for, there was a chance they wouldn't notice, and as Theia was required to persuade them, they couldn't carelessly broadcast a signal as the enemy would find her location.

So instead, Koutarou and the others decided to chase after the Elfaria faction's strike force. But because of the low amount of time, they couldn't use the truck they had been using up until now. Instead, they used their own powers to fly. Those powers being the armor, the Combat Dress and a magical broom. They moved quickly and since they didn't need to worry about their magical power being detected this time, they could go at full speed while concealing themselves with magic. Thanks to that, they looked like they would make it in time before the attack was launched.

“If we for some reason don't make it there before it's time... it'll end up being a big bet, but I am thinking of broadcasting a ceasefire over the entire region”

“If that happens, I'll protect you. So don't worry”

”That's my line. Don't slow me down”

”Okay, okay, as you wish”

Theia and Koutarou were joking around as usual, but contrary to the contents, their expressions were anything but cheerful. If anything, they were words to calm each other down.

“What kind of relation are those two in? They don't look like just master and servant”

Crimson looked at the two in confusion. She already had knowledge on how the class system worked in Forthorthe. But she couldn't feel any traces of that system from the two in front of her. She couldn't help but feel confused, and decided to ask Yurika about it, despite them strictly speaking being enemies.

“... They were on bad terms at first. Then a lot of things happened and they started getting along, after that Satomi-san became her vassal”

Knowing that Crimson was an enemy, she carefully chose her words as she

explained Koutarou's and Theia's relationship to her.

“So they're still dragging along those feelings from when they were enemies”

“I think so”

“... Is Maki like that too?”

”Ah...”

That was where Yurika realized Crimson's real intentions.

Crimson-san is worrying about Maki-chan...

It was because Crimson worried about Maki that she was interested in Koutarou's and Theia's relationship. Had Maki been released from the shackles known as Darkness Rainbow, or were they still holding her down. Even now that they were enemies, Crimson still cared for Maki.

“... Uhm, she's fine. There's no one among us that would criticize Maki-chan's past. To begin with, everyone were enemies at first”

“I see...”

Crimson showed a small smile. Her smile looked so happy that Yurika momentarily forgot that the girl in front of her was an evil magical girl.

“But I'm sure Maki is still stuck on it”

”Yes. Maki-chan sometimes seems to worry about nobody pressing her about her crimes”

“Even though that's not necessary”

”Maki-chan is serious after all”

”If only that man would forcibly make Maki his woman everyone would be much simpler”

”That wouldn't be a fundamental solution”

”... For now I'll settle for Maki being with a group of friends that would say that”

“Crimson-san, you...”

It was extremely rare for Dark Crimson, who was even called an ogre within Darkness Rainbow, to show an expression a normal girl would have. That's why Yurika could feel how much Maki meant to Crimson, and at the same time she felt sad that even then, she didn't choose Maki.

“... We're almost there”

However, Crimson's expression suddenly returned to normal.

“Eh?”

“Look, reinforcements are here”

Crimson pointed behind them. As the surprised Yurika turned that way, she saw five girls in colorful outfits, and a man slightly older than the girls, flying towards them at high speeds. Yurika recognized that group.

“Satomi-san! It's Darkness Rainbow!”

”I know. But I can't sense any hostility”

”The way they're flying doesn't make it look like they're preparing to attack either. At least for now”

Because of their previous experiences, Koutarou and the others instinctively got more defensive.

“You don't have to worry, they're allies”

”I do understand that in my head”

Koutarou and the others understood that Crimson was right. However, they couldn't help but ready their weapons. If this was a trap, Theia's life was in danger.

“We have no intentions of fighting you right now, Koutarou-kun!”

Sensing the atmosphere around Koutarou and the others, once he was close enough, Elexis approached the group with empty hands raised up in the air. The mechanical armored clothes he was wearing came equipped with a lot of weapons, but they were all pointed upwards. Elexis was showing that he had no hostile intentions.

“He's right. Without you we can't convince the Elfaria faction to stop their attack”

Besides Elexis was Maya, shrugging her shoulders, her expression made it clear that she felt dissatisfied. It was a sign that she'd never want to team up like this if it wasn't for the current situation.

“I know! I'm just puzzled by the sudden situation”

Koutarou finally let go of the handles of his swords. Theia and Yurika followed suit. They were still on guard, but the three of them understood that they shouldn't be fighting the group now.

“... What a strange development”

Koutarou mumbled between his sighs. In response Elexis nodded in approval.

“I feel the same way. I didn't expect that Bandarion would go this far”

Elexis and the others were puzzled by the situation as well. He wanted to cooperate with the army to end the imperial reign and use the influence he gained by doing so to create a new political system, and seize control of it, so that he could create his ideal world. But with Bandarion going this far, the military would gain complete control of the new political system. Moreover, there was a high chance that it would be a reign of terror. In that case, even if Elexis gained control, he wouldn't be able to create his ideal world.

“Wasn't it just that you poked Max— no, Bandarion, too much?”

”Poke? What do you mean?”

”That by skillfully selling yourself in, you made him feel a sense of danger”

”I see, so that's why he would forcibly try to reach a conclusion. That's certainly within the realm of possibilities”

Elexis was aware of what Koutarou was pointing out, so he nodded understandingly. Maya had felt the same way, but her reaction was the opposite.

“El, you're too efficient. You should be a little bit more adult”

”Okay, okay, I'll be careful. You mean to be more mindful when I create an atmosphere, right?”

”... Geez... men really are...:”

Maya's and Elexis' back and forth seemed reminiscent of Koutarou's and the girls. If that was an act it was quite impressive, and Koutarou was starting to trust them, in a roundabout way. At least this time.

“But Koutarou-kun, when it comes to making him feel a sense of danger, you and I are equally punishable”

”... That might be true”

Koutarou honestly agreed. He and the other girls had very one-sidedly dealt with the soldiers that had been sent to attack them. So it wouldn't be strange for them to get a sense of danger. So it might not just be Elexis' fault, but Koutarou's and the others too.

“But with this, you understand too, right?”

”What are you talking about?”

”The reason why I believe Her Majesty Elfaria's reign won't work”

Elfaria's reign couldn't prevent the military from becoming arrogant. As a result, they even took to such reckless acts such as using a virus weapon. The royal families of Forthorthe had protected the country for a long time, but even then they couldn't suppress karma built up over that long period of time. Elexis believed that the system of rule should be reformed from scratch.

“... I understand, but I can't agree”

Koutarou understood what Elexis was thinking, he even thought he had a point too. However, it was a difficult topic when it came to accepting that or not. Elexis interpreted it as the age having continued for over 2,000 years was too long, but Koutarou interpreted it as there being a reason for why it had lasted for so long. Koutarou thought that the national traits and the climate worked well together. That's why he believed there was a point in reforming, but not that there was a need to end the imperial rule.

“That's enough for now, Koutarou-kun”

Changing someone's opinion was hard. The first step was getting them to listen. As a businessman, Elexis understood that very well. There was also no time to convince Koutarou right now.

“Hey, young master, sorry for interrupting your conversation, but shouldn't we, like, start preparing?”

That was when Dark Orange flew up in front of Koutarou and Elexis. Like Elexis, she was worrying about the time. But as expected of Dark Orange who loved cute things. Her tone and gestures were all strangely cute, and didn't convey any sense of seriousness.

“You're right, let's”

”... You're being called young master?”

“She won't change it no matter how many times I ask”

”While reluctant, I understand how you feel”

”Hahaha”

Elexis laughed cheerfully as he signaled Darkness Rainbow with his hand. They readied their canes, but that wasn't to attack Koutarou and the others. The magical power was directed at themselves.

“What are you planning on doing?”

”It would be very problematic if it's revealed that we are ourselves. So we'll be going disguised”

Elexis put on the helmet that came with his armored clothes. His and Koutarou's armors had similar functions. And by putting on the helmet, the armored clothes changed into combat mode and transmitted energy to the combat equipment.

“A disguise?”

“Yes. Today, we are—”

That was when Darkness Rainbow was covered in white smoke. The disguising spell had activated.

“— the Satomi band of knights!”

By the time the smoke cleared, the girls of Darkness Rainbow had changed appearances. They had transformed into Kiriha and the others who weren't around. Moreover Elexis' armored clothes had changed into a standard

imperial army armor. That meant that Elexis and Darkness Rainbow had not come here, to this place, today. They would be acting as people under the Elfaria faction.

Part 5

Satomi and the other two, plus the eight from the fake Satomi band of knights, managed to catch up to the Elfaria faction's strike force just before the scheduled time of attack. As they were hiding in the woods, waiting for the trailer in question to pass through the road they were watching, they couldn't directly see them. But as the cleverly camouflaged communications antenna was standing in its planned location, there was no doubt they were there.

“... Geez, looks like we made it. The forecast of the trailer getting attacked just wouldn't go away, so I couldn't help but feel nervous”

Green, disguised as Clan, let out a sigh of relief as they discovered the antenna. As she had the ability of future forecast, she knew several of the possible outcomes. Because of that, the sense of danger she felt was a lot more grounded in reality than the others”

”Princess, shouldn't you contact them?”

”I was just thinking of doing that”

Urged on by Dark Orange disguised as Sanae, Theia ordered her Combat Dress to communicate with the strike force. At first, Orange and Theia had been hostile towards one another. That was due to their fighting back in Folsaria. However, their common goal had resolved the hostility. They both knew that now wasn't the time to argue about personal issues.

“This is Theiamillis! Can you hear me?”

”Your Highness!? Why are you here!?”

The voice of the man serving as the strike force commander came responding through the communications device. Theia was using laser for communications, simply put it was like using a landline telephone, only the

landline is replaced by light. As laser communication was a simple form of communication that required direct contact between speakers, it wasn't suitable for communication with places out of line of sight or places far away, nor was it good at transmitting images. Instead it came with the superb characteristics of having little of risk of being jammed or intercepted. As they could see the communications antenna, this was the safest and most reliable form of communication.

“Don't worry about me!! More importantly, cease your attack right away!! This is one of Bandarion's traps!! The trailer is carrying mobile weapons, but a virus weapon!!”

”What!?”

Theia didn't say a lot, but it was enough for the commander to understand the situation. The commander was a quick-witted man, suited for his post.

“... Hey, let all the men know that the attack is being cancelled! Don't shoot, no matter what!”

Not even putting Theia on hold, the commander quickly gave out orders to his subordinates. While it was disrespectful, it was preferable considering the situation.

“Did we make it?”

“Please rest easy, Your Highness. There is still five minutes left before the attack, so there won't be any attacks made by mistake”

”.. .I see... that's good...”

Theia let out a big sigh of relief as her tension eased. As expected, having the lives of a lot people was tense, and the relief from it was deep. However, it was not over yet. The Elfaria faction strike force needed to retreat without being spotted by the imperial army. Having recollected herself, Theia called out to the commander again.

“Anyways, we will head over there—”

Theia was planning on supporting the strike force on their retreat, when Green raised her voice.

“Wait a moment! This is strange!”

Surprised by her sudden loud voice, Yellow, disguised as Harumi, furrowed her brows.

“Kyaa!? ...Wait, what happened?”

”The forecast of the trailer being attacked isn't disappearing!”

Green's future forecast became clearer the more realistic they got. At the same time, as the probability of the future happening dropped, the future got hazier, until it could no longer be seen. In other words, the moment the commander gave the order, the future of the trailer exploding should have disappeared. Yet, Green could still see it.

“Maybe the trailer's driver will end up in an accident and charge into the area where the Elfaria faction is and ending up forcing their hand, or something?”

Blue, disguised as Ruth, spoke her own interpretation. Blue rarely spoke, but when she did, she did so after thinking things through. Considering the situation, it wasn't an impossible interpretation. However, Green shook her head.

“Even after a ceasefire has been given, the probability has barely dropped at all!! So that can't be the reason!!”

If the trailer would explode because of an accident, there would be futures of the accident happening, and the accident not happening, and the moment the order of a ceasefire came, the future should get a lot hazier. However, that hadn't happened, which meant that the explosion wouldn't be by accident.

The explosion won't be by accident, it will happen as it was meant to. And since there has been a ceasefire ordered, it's not attack from the Elfaria faction. Which means... I see!!

That was when Purple's brain reached the answer to the forecast not changing. Just like Kiriha, whom Purple was disguised as, she was calm and smart.

“They're like us! There's some Bandarion soldiers disguised as the Elfaria faction planning on attacking the trailer!”

Bandarion wanted to be certain that his trap succeeded. However, there was a slight concern. They needed to take utmost care as they transported

the virus weapon. The container was of course sturdy, and the vessel containing the virus itself was well made too. That's why there was still a chance that the virus wouldn't be spread even after an attack.

What if the engine was destroyed and the trailer was stopped on the road?

What if the container broke, but the vessel remained intact?

In order to eliminate those uncertain aspects, Bandarion had soldiers infiltrate the Elfaria faction, to ensure the attack went as he had planned. They would know what kind of attack would destroy the vessel after all.

“So that's it!! Green, where are Bandarion's followers!?”

When it came down to it, Theia's mind worked quickly. Having quickly realized the situation, Theia increased the output of the Combat Dress' generator.

“They're probably by the woods over there! In the ten o'clock direction of the communications antenna!”

”Let's go, Koutarou, Yurika!”

“Got it!”

“O-Okay!”

“And just in case, set the equipment for space use! We're dealing with a virus after all!”

Their only lead was Green's future forecast. It was a very ambiguous lead, but all they could do was believe in her and act on it. If Bandarion really had men infiltrating the strike force, the outcome would be catastrophic. Koutarou and the others could only wish that Green's forecast was wrong. At the same time, they wished her forecast was accurate and that there were enemies where she had directed them. The most frightening scenario would be if Bandarion's soldiers really were here, but the location wasn't were Green foresaw. With those complex feelings in mind, Koutarou and the others flew through the sky at full speed to where Green had pointed them.

“El, we should go too!”

“Yes! In these situations the more hands and eyes the better!”

Elexis, Maya and the six Darkness Rainbow leaders chased after Koutarou and the others. In order to accomplish their own goals, they couldn't allow Bandarion's reckless actions.

Part 6

A detailed strategy had been set up beforehand in regards to the trailer attack. Because of that, the soldiers had been placed in according to the region's geographical features. According to the strategy documents, there shouldn't be any Elfaria faction soldiers where Green had pointed them to. In other words, if there happened to be Elfaria faction soldiers where there should be none, it meant they were Bandarion's disguised soldiers. And they were objects of immediate elimination.

“Theia, I found them!”

”Are you certain!?”

”Probably! I'll send you the data right now!”

Koutarou could sense the presence of people with his spiritual powers. As human intellect was high, humans had an aura distinctively different from other animals. And those distinct auras could be sensed coming from within the woods. Koutarou used his armor's sensors to get a rough scan of the area, and sent the data to Theia's Combat Dress.

“These are the coordinates, huh... hm, I've got a hit on my sensors too! There's no doubt!”

Using the data Koutarou sent as her basis, Theia pointed her Combat Dress' sensors in the direction where the enemy was believed to be. The sensors responded with people being present. As Theia's Combat Dress was fully intended for use in combat, its sensors were somewhat better performing than those in Koutarou's armor.

“Satomi-san! The trailer is coming!”

As Koutarou and the others discovered Bandarion's ambush, the large trailer appeared on the road. As they could see from above, the trailer was

still far, but at this rate, it would be here soon enough. They had to get the ambushers away from the trailer.

“Theia, have the Elfaria faction soldiers stop the trailer! We'll go eliminate the disguised soldiers!”

Koutarou made a swift judgment and left the contacting to Theia while he charged towards the area the soldiers were believed to be.

“I'm counting on you! I'll get there too as soon as I can!”

As Theia needed to contact the strike forces, she would end up following after Koutarou somewhat later. That meant it would be more dangerous for him, but there was no need to worry. There were some who were following after him already.

“We will go back up Koutarou-kun!”

”Everyone, be careful not to go too far and expose yourselves! I'm talking about you, Crimson!”

”I get it, Maya!”

Elexis, Maya and the six from Darkness Rainbow were following behind Koutarou. With those eight backing Koutarou up there was no need for Theia to worry. She had physically experienced how strong they were. Meanwhile, Yurika decided to act alone.

“Satomi-san, Theia-chan, I will head to the trailer. We wouldn't want something unexpected to happen”

The strike force was already headed to the trailer, but as this was Bandarion's trap, there was no telling what could happen. As a precaution, sending Yurika, who could adapt to most situations, was the best choice. Koutarou agreed with Yurika's idea.

“We're counting on you!”

”Yes!”

Yurika parted with Koutarou and turned in a large arc and flew towards the trailer. After seeing her off, Koutarou put his hands on the two swords hanging off his waist. That was just about when Elexis caught up to him.

“I'll help you out, Koutarou-kun”

Elexis had a cheerful smile as he readied the rifle in his hands. He was planning on backing Koutarou up with that.

“I'll honestly thank you this time”

”I might not look it, but I am good at shooting. Leave it to me”

”... I'm counting on you”

”You won't regret it. This time”

After finishing their preparations they caught a glimpse of the Elfaria faction soldiers in the woods. These were of course fakes. They were Bandarion's soldiers who had imitated the strike force's armor and markings.

“I understand how you fight! So be as extreme as always!”

“You leave that to me! You just don't be too accurate! It's a bad habit of yours!”

In front of Koutarou were fake ”allies”, and he alongside him were ”fake” allies fighting with him. It was a strange battlefield were neither were real, but it was without a doubt the truth that he was now working together with Elexis and the others whom he had always been fighting against. He was well aware that it was only temporary, but Koutarou was honestly pleased.

There was basically no difference between how the imperial army and how the Elfaria faction looked. As they were all originally imperial soldiers, they had the same equipment. If there was a difference it was the markings on armor and equipment each unit had. Because of that, it was easy to pretend to be someone else, and all that really had to be done was change the markings. It was a situation that was easy to make use of.

While both couldn't tell one another apart, there was a clear cut reason for why these weren't Elfaria faction soldiers. That was the mobile weapons protecting the soldiers.

“They have mobile weapons!! Elexis, do you know anything about them!?”

If they flew towards them, they'd be easy targets. So Koutarou descended to the surface and charged the imperial army unit consisting of several dozen members. As he did, and the distance to the imperial army

shortened, he could see not just the soldiers, but small mobile weapons that had been deployed. This was Koutarou's first time seeing them, so he asked for Elexis' advice.

“Of course I know. That's our product”

Elexis sniped the imperial army's communications antenna while casually answering. That came as a surprise to Koutarou.

“It's your company's!?”

”That's right. It's a frame we began delivering last month”

On the side of the mobile weapons was the mark of Elexis' company, DKI. These mobile weapons was the latest model of Dragon Knight Industries.

“Do they have some kind of weak point!?”

Koutarou was confident that he could win against normal mobile weapons, but hearing that they were from DKI, he started feeling uneasy. Elexis' mobile weapons had put him through a lot of trouble.

“None. Since they were made using data gained from fighting against you. While they don't have any core technology in them, they haven't been made haphazardly”

The new model mobile weapons made by DKI weren't all that difference when comparing them to the design and role of the old models the imperial army had been using. They still had a design and role somewhere between a fighter and a tank. While it might look like nothing had changed, that wasn't the case at all. The big changes were all on the inside.

These new weapons had been made using the data gained from battles against Koutarou and the others, and from the technology that had been used back then. While they didn't have any special technology such as magic or spiritual energy, they included quite a few technologies designed to defeat Koutarou. As a result, their performance was greatly improved and were clearly distinct from the older models.

“They're not as strong as the combined force of Warlord II and the Motor Knights, but you'll end up eating dirt if you take them for your average mobile weapon”

”You make it sound easy...”

”Ah! They did have one weak point, Koutarou-kun!”

”What, tell me now!”

“The running cost of lone units is poor. It's better to deploy lots of them to reduce the operating cost. Like this”

“That's not a weak point!!”

With the communications antenna destroyed, one of the mobile weapons noticed Koutarou's and the others approaching. Without missing a beat, all mobile weapons moved at once. Their numbers totalled eight. Since they'd be attacking in cooperation, they made a frightening enemy. What's worse, they had data on Koutarou and the others so it was clear they would make forced attacks from the start.

“Detected high energy signatures! Laser cannons will be fired in unison!”

The armor's AI gave out a warning. Having confirmed Koutarou's appearance and assumed him to be a treat, the mobile weapons showed signs of a synchronous attack. In order to defeat Koutarou, who was moving at high speeds, in a single strike, they were going to perform a simultaneous attack the weapon of choice being the fastest of them all, the laser. That was something that Elexis in his Warlord II and the accompanying Motor Knights were good at.

“You're always making such troublesome stuff!”

”Ahaha, quite the masterpiece from myself!”

”Now's not the time to laugh!”

“I know. Orange, Green, please do it”

”Leave it to me, young master!”

”... Geez, at least prepare an emergency stop command...”

Orange and Green began their incantations.

“Twinkle Star Burst!”

The spell that Orange cast created a glittering material that altered the air and diffused light. It was a flashy spell that Orange loved to use, but it also served to rapidly weakened lasers.

“Perfect Illusion – Modifier – Area Effect – Large!”

With a frown, Green activated an illusion spell that covered a wide area. Green was skilled at information manipulating spells, which included illusions. With her skills, she could create illusions that even fooled machines. Right now, she had used those illusions to shift Koutarou and others several meters away.

“Warning, laser cannon attack beginning!”

Immediately after the AI's warning, the eight mobile weapon's lasers fired at almost the exact same time. The laser instantly hit its target without sound. That target was of course Koutarou, who was deemed to be the most dangerous.

“The distortion field has been hit, energy loss is medium”

Fortunately, Koutarou himself didn't take any damage. Orange's spell had greatly reduced the potency of the lasers, and Green's spell had messed with the aim, leaving Koutarou largely unscathed. If the eight shots had all hit the same spot, Koutarou would have defeated immediately, but at most only one of the stray lasers struck the barrier.

“That was close...”

That said, Koutarou didn't feel good knowing he was being targeted by something that could take him out in a single hit, so he increased his speed even more. He needed to shorten the distance as quickly as possible and seal off the synchronous attack.

“I'm coming with you, Koutarou”

Crimson followed after Koutarou. As she did, she smiled with Shizuka's face. As their way of fighting and atmosphere was similar, Koutarou couldn't help but feel that the smile looked natural. The smile also made him think of wanting to meet his companions far away.

“Let's go, Crimson!”

”I'll protect you because Maki's a friend!”

It wouldn't be until much later that Koutarou realized that Crimson had said 'because Maki's a friend'. Was that simply referring to him, or was it referring to herself as well. That difference held a great meaning. Koutarou

regretted missing that.

Part 7

As Koutarou and the others began fighting with the concealed Bandarion soldiers, Yurika had almost reached the trailer. It was hers and the strike force's job to keep the trailer from moving towards Koutarou and the others any further.

“... So trailers were this big...”

Yurika was somewhat puzzled when faced with the trailer. It was far bigger than she had imagined upon hearing the word.

That was because to Yurika, and to people from Earth, the trailer was to her more like a cargo train. That impression was especially strong as it had no tires and floated above the road instead. If one were to compare to an Earth trailer, they would find that it was at least three times as long and wide.

Thinking about it calmly, it was only natural for the trailer to be large. While they may have been disassembled, it was supposed to be secretly transporting large mobile weapons, so it would need to be large itself. Moreover, large trailers were a necessity for Alaia that was still under development.

“... We won't be able to stop it easily... but if we use a lot of firepower, the virus' vessel might be destroyed...”

As it was a large trailer, some weak attacks wouldn't do much to slow it down. Using enough force to stop the trailer ran the risk of destroying the vessel for virus being contained within. That's why, before she attacked, there was something she had to do.

I remember Satomi-san that nothing good will come from putting off things that have to be done!

Yurika quickly decided on what she needed to do and operated her bracelet to contact the commander from the Elfaria faction.

“What might it be, Yurika-dono?”

Yurika's position was a knight of the Satomi band of knights who were under direct command of Theia. Because of that, the commander spoke formally to her, as he would a knight.

“I will move over to the trailer and determine where the virus weapon is! Until then, please refrain from using any large-scale attacks!”

At the present moment they didn't know where, or how many of the virus weapon there was. If they had to attack the trailer to stop it, they needed to confirm the situation inside the container.

“We will send several over as well! It is dangerous to go alone!”

”Please do! We have to stop this no matter what!”

Normally, Yurika would have refused help. Fighting alone would reduce the number of casualties after all. However, this time, that wasn't the case. If they didn't find the virus weapon, there would be a large amount of casualties. Yurika searching on her own was not a smart decision.

“Here I go! After I've gotten on, I'll secure the area, please follow after me from where I got on!”

”Of course! Best of luck to you!”

”Thank you!”

After that short report, Yurika took the lead and flew towards the trailer on her broom. The soldiers watched on, and began speaking about her.

“That's a rather cute Sir Knight... but she is very courageous”

“She was modest to boot. She spoke politely, and even said thanks at the end”

”As expected of Princess Theia's band of knights, I guess?”

“We're Princess Theia's and Empress Elfaria's military forces too! We can't lose to them!”

Yurika's back was very small. But it was overflowing with seven colors of love and courage. Guided by the light of that shining rainbow, the soldiers advanced with force.

Part 8

As they were pretending to be part of the Satomi band of knights, Elexis and the others would need to fight following their policies. In other words, fighting while limiting the casualties as much as possible, that policy was something they inherited from Theia, who inherited from the royal families. While they were the young CEO of an evil massive corporation, and evil magical girls, it seemed like they would have a hard time with that, but that wasn't actually the case.

“Couldn't you guys work as Rainbow Heart as well!?”

Looking at Crimson skillfully dispatching of the imperial army soldiers without killing them, Koutarou felt surprise. In response, Crimson grinned as she punched the next soldier.

“Just mowing down the enemy isn't enough for an organization planning on overthrowing the government. Have you ever heard of an evil organization that only assassinates?”

Darkness Rainbow mostly used magic to construct plots to move the world. In fact, using direct force happened less often. That said, Crimson was awkward when it came to that, so her allies had often ended up making tools and weapons to keep her from killing the enemy. That was precisely what the glove she was using was. It had been enchanted to knock out anyone punched with it.

“So in purely numerical terms, you guys use more violence, but in terms of ratios, Yurika and the others are more violent”

”Well, keeping us under control is your job, so that's only natural. Ironic isn't it”

”If you guys would just stop, Yurika and the others wouldn't have to use violence either”

”Sadly, I want the opposite! Like this!”

After eliminating the soldiers before her, Crimson held her cane in both hands. As she did, a brightly burning fireball was launched. Her next target was the mobile weapons that were bombarding them from the rear. She

was allowed to blow them away to her heart's content.

“Well, that helps now!”

”That's ironic too!”

As if chasing after Crimson's fireball, Koutarou charged. In his case, GOL was blocking the soldiers from getting closer to him, so he could focus on the mobile weapons. He came swinging at the mobile weapon hit by the fireball and whose barrier was under heavy load.

“What!?”

However, Signaltin was suddenly caught by a glowing, cylindrical shaped something that had suddenly appeared in front of the mobile weapon. As Koutarou was surprised by that, he was fired at with a beam cannon intended for close quarters use.

“Kuh!?”

Koutarou twisted his body back on reflex. Thanks to Sanae's spiritual powers, the speed at which signals from his brain moved had increased, and his movements barely allowed him to avoid a direct hit. But it was still an undeniable truth that he had gotten hit by a beam cannon at close range. The attack stripped GOL's barrier of most of its energy. At the same time, the glowing something had been thrust forward, but as Koutarou was cautious of any further attacks, he dodged it.

“That was close! Elexis, what is this!?”

”It was made to block your sword, it's a thin and narrow, concentrated distortion field. It's like a knife used for both attack and defense in close combat”

Energy was stronger when gathered in a small area. In that case, by making the barrier smaller, Koutarou's sword, Signaltin, though Elexis didn't know its name, could be blocked as well. That had been the thought process behind the creation of this glowing pole.

This was a weapon that would be impossible for normal humans to use. The glowing pole, or the knife, had a short reach, so blocking a sword was difficult. Moreover, because of its small size it was lighter, making it difficult to fully kill the impact from the sword. It was feat made possible only through the eight mobile weapons observing Koutarou, calculating the

optimal place of defense and using their full power to maintain the knife's location.

“I call it the Field Knife. It's a superb creation if you ask me. It surprised you right?”

“I was! But tell me that kind of earlier!”

While Koutarou and Elexis were joking around, they busily moved their bodies. Koutarou dodged the enemy attacks while firing a lightning spell from his sword. Meanwhile Elexis use his rifle to accurately snipe at mobile weapons so they wouldn't get too close to Koutarou. The two fought like veteran heroes.

El seems to be having fun...

The two's coordination deserved a special mention. The two moved as if they had fought together for years, and the way they joked around only strengthened that impression. In reality they were finding each others openings and covering them, but even then Elexis seemed to be having fun in Maya's eyes. And that put in her a bad mood. The feelings Elexis was directing towards Koutarou was a kind he had never directed towards her.

“Sorry, sorry, but that doesn't work against your second sword, so I figured there was no need to tell you”

”Like I said!”

Koutarou had one sword in each hand. In his right hand was Alaia's Signaltin and in his left was Theia's Saguratin. When attacking the mobile weapons this time, he swung his left sword instead.

“Tell me that earlier!”

The physical Saguratin's blade was stopped by the distortion field, but the blade of spiritual energy created from it was not. The spiritual energy blade passed through the knife and hit the mobile weapon directly.

The attack cut up the mobile weapon and caused heavy damage. Explosions occurred one after another on the inside and it became incapacitated before long. Looking on, the results were exactly what Elexis had foreseen.

“... As expected, that's what happens with these specs”

Magic could be stopped to some extent by scientific means, but it couldn't block spiritual energy at all. Spiritual energy technology or magic was required to block that, but production of either was poor, moreover Elexis wanted to keep those a secret as a card to play against Bandarion. Because of that, this outcome was inevitable. He was happy that Koutarou could defeat the enemies, but he wasn't happy seeing his own creations lose. Elexis was feeling both happy and disappointed.

“... El, if you space out, your lover will go off on his own”

”You're right, oh no!”

Having stopped to think, Maya admonished Elexis and he hurriedly moved to supporting Koutarou again. Koutarou had already begun moving towards the second mobile weapon. It would be dangerous to leave him be.

Men really are...!

Maya had been as sarcastic as she could, yet Elexis had left without noticing. With her running in circles being added on, her mood was on a steady decline.

“Stop playing around, and get to work!”

”Sorry, but it's all okay now”

The battle in the woods was progressing in Koutarou's and the others advantage. Koutarou and Elexis, and Darkness Rainbow's teamwork was strong, and the enemy numbers gradually decreased. However, that was when an unexpected tidbit of information arrived

“Koutarou, this is bad! Yurika is having a tough time!”

”What!?”

Theia who arrived late came bearing information that Yurika was in danger. As Theia had been delayed giving out orders and sending information, she had a better grasp of the overall situation than Koutarou and the others.

“What kind of tough time!?”

”It seems like there were enemies hiding over there too! And large ones at that!”

The Elfaria faction strike force and Yurika who were headed towards the trailer found themselves struggling after an unexpected ambush. The soldiers tagging along transmitted the information to the rear guard, which was how Theia got her hand on it.

“Elexis, I'll leave this to you!”

”I guess it can't be helped, go on ahead!”

”Grab on, Koutarou!”

Koutarou and Theia made a quick decision. As Koutarou put his hand on Theia's Combat Dress, the powerful thruster installed on it spat out fires and the two flew up into the sky in no time at all. They drew a wide arc, as if they were a missile, and flew towards the trailer where Yurika was.

Part 9

What welcomed Yurika as she approached the trailer was a lot of defensive weapons. While it may have been disguised as a civilian vehicle, it was most definitely still a military one. It had heavy machine guns, small missiles and other weapons used for defensive purposes. As there was some distance, none of the attacks hit, but that might not be the case should she continue approaching. Yurika wasn't foolish enough to continue a charge like that.

“Multiple Energy Bolt – Target Option – Auto Homing!”

Using Theia's normal methods as reference, Yurika cast an attack spell to destroy the weapons before she got shot. Yurika's spell created many balls of energy that fired at their targets, and they travelled as if they were guided missiles towards the weapons.

However, Yurika's spell dispersed before it reached the trailer.

“A barrier!?”

The trailer was equipped with a barrier.

“It's impossible for me to break through that barrier!! What should I do!?”

Yurika's spells could easily break through a military grade barrier for personal use. However, the barrier a military vehicle of this size came equipped with had a generator on a completely different league, and breaking through it with Yurika's magic would be next to impossible. The Elfaria faction's soldiers had large anti-vehicle weapons, so those could be used to break through the barrier. However, if they were too powerful, the cargo on the trailer would get damaged as well. Struggling to come up with a solution, Yurika distanced herself from the trailer. If she recklessly charged in, she'd be nothing but a target.

“... In that case, I'll have to make a daring move!”

Yurika stopped to think for a moment, but she hadn't forgotten that a swift decision would need to be made. Quickly reaching a solution, Yurika contacted the commander once more.

“Sorry, where is the barrier generation device on that trailer!?”

”It's the dome on the rear of the body!”

“I got it!”

”What are you planning to do!?”

”I have a plan! Please continue forwards as you are!”

Yurika turned her broom around and headed towards the trailer again, beginning an incantation.

“Recall – Precast – Teleport!”

High-ranking magicians like Yurika would cast spells that would take too long to cast, or expended large amounts of magical power, ahead of time, and maintain them in an idle state. The spell Yurika had activated was one of those spells, the spell of teleportation. As using it for even short distances put the user under a lot of burden, it was one of the most common spells to maintain in an idle state.

Blue magical power concentrated on a point on the broom, before covering all of Yurika's body.

“Goooooo!!”

The vast amounts of magical power around Yurika warped space, turning into a space-time hole. The next moment, Yurika disappeared like fog, and at the same time she appeared at the rear of the trailer, landing on top of the roof. Yurika had successfully teleported.

“If I can only destroy this!”

At the same time as Yurika landed, her broom turned into a magical cane. Holding that in both hands she pointed the tip at the dome-formed device. That was the barrier generation device.

“Terrible Thunder Lance – Modifier – Empower!”

Standing on top of the trailer meant that neither machine guns or missiles could attack right away. The safety measures needed to be deactivated, and the weapons manually controlled. During that opening, Yurika cast a potent spell. It was an offensive spell that created a powerful electric bolt.

“Eeeeeeeiiii!!”

The powerful lightning shook the atmosphere with a loud boom and it easily pierced the trailer's armor, frying all of the circuits within. With that, the barrier generation device seized to function, and the barrier protecting the trailer vanished. The attack caused the components to explode, but there was no large-scale destruction like one would expect from explosions. That was precisely the result Yurika had aimed for.

“Huah!?”

Moreover, Yurika found herself unexpectedly lucky. After running through the barrier generation device, it ran through the trailer's electrical system. Thanks to that, the trailer lost its power and its buoyancy disappeared, making it fall some dozen centimeters to the ground.

“Kyaaaaa!?”

The intense impact made Yurika cling onto the barrier generation device she had just destroyed. After scraping along the road for a while, the trailer finally came to a stop.

“... D-Did it stop?”

Yurika opened one of her tightly closed eyes and confirmed her surroundings. The trailer had stopped in the middle of the road and smoke was rising from various parts of the body. However, it didn't seem to have taken a lot of damage. That was because the trailer had been designed not to take a lot of damage, even if it lost power while running.

“That's right, I have to hurry!”

Yurika didn't know the real reason for why the trailer had stopped. It might have been completely destroyed, or its safeties might just have been tripped by the high voltage, and it could start up again, sooner or later. There was a lot of things to do before that.

“Commander-san, please come right away! It's safe now!”

”Well done, Yurika-dono! We'll be there in just a moment!”

Yurika contacted her allies with her bracelet and used magic to destroy the machine guns and missile launchers. Once that was over, she hurriedly headed towards the trailer's rear hatch. There, she was able to group up

with the strike force.

“Please wait a moment, I'll cut it open right away!”

One of the military engineers approached the hatch with a blowtorch, reading cut off the lock to the hatch.

As the blowtorch spewed out extremely high temperature plasma, the metallic lock of the trailer was cut open before their very eyes. It didn't take more than ten seconds to cut off half of the lock. At this rate the hatch would be opened. And that was when the hatch was swung open from the inside.

The engineer cutting the lock was blown away and flew towards Yurika.

“Kyaaaaaaaaaa!!”

Yurika ended up being pushed down by the engineer and she landed on her butt. The engineer's eyes were spinning, but fortunately, neither Yurika nor the engineer were hurt. Relieved by that, Yurika looked up to figure out what had happened.

“Eh...?”

Before Yurika's eyes, giant legs appeared. As she looked up further, she saw a stocky giant in thick armor.

Unlike poison, a virus would self-replicate once it had infected someone. That's why a large amount wasn't necessary when used in an attack. That's why Bandarion had shoved a several meters tall giant into the open space, in the case that the trailer was attacked before reaching the designated location, or other various troubles.

“This is... the first giant!”

Yurika had seen the giant before. Not directly, but she had seen it on documented footage. It was the large mobile weapon that Elexis had used when he first appeared as Ruth's fiancé.

Elexis had used multiple giant robots to attack, but there were many secrets regarding the Warlord series, and it hadn't been supplied to the imperial army. However, the first giant that had been used already had a product model and was being sold. Like the mobile weapons that Koutarou and the others were fighting in the woods, this giant didn't have magic or spiritual

energy technology, it had a great deal more power than the imperial army's standard equipment. It was a very dangerous machine.

“Commander-san, fall back right away!”

”But, leaving Yurika-dono on your own—”

“This isn't an opponent that will go so easy on you!”

Yurika's intuition told her that if it was just this giant on its own, she should be able to win on her own. If there were two, she would still win with the soldiers' backup. Three would put them on an even stage, while four and beyond would leave them at a disadvantage. In total there were six giants. There was only one in front of Yurika, but the other five were getting up from the trailer.

“Retreat right now, and call for Theia-chan and Satomi-san!! We need their help!!”

Yurika quickly began incanting a defensive spell. If they fought them straight on, Yurika and the soldiers would be destroyed in an instant. All she could do now was to have the soldiers retreat and call for Koutarou and Theia while she protected them.

Part 10

Flying up into the sky, Theia and Koutarou could see Yurika struggling. She was over a kilometer away, but their computers enlarged the image and displayed her appearance.

Yurika was covered in scratches and dirt, and was desperately fighting. She used defensive spells and illusions to hold off the attacks of six giants all on her own. The shine in her eyes and her determined expression made a clear distinction from her usual self.

“Yurika is getting beat up! Theia!”

“I know, cover your ears!”

“Don't hit the trailer!”

”Who do you think you're talking to!!”

Theia repeatedly fired the large anti-material cannons above her shoulders. The shells flew faster than the eye could see and assaulted the giant about to attack Yurika. The shells didn't on impact, and instead destroyed the barrier and crushed the giant's left arm.

“Theia, can you follow after me!?”

With Theia's attack, the giants, or more accurately their pilots, directed their hostility towards Koutarou and Theia. To Koutarou, the hostility looked like lines of spiritual energy, and avoiding those would allow them to dodge the attacks. However, Theia couldn't do that. Her following after Koutarou would allow her to dodge the attacks as well.

“Like I said, who do you think you're talking to!?”

Theia easily followed after Koutarou's complex movements. Thanks to that, the two of them dodged all enemy fire. The only exception was guided missiles, but Theia shot down them with her beam rifle as she dodged the other attacks.

“... To my beloved princess”

The words that slipped out of Koutarou's mouth was how he really felt. That was just how splendid Theia's moves were. Theia's athletic ability, kinetic vision and reflexes were all beyond excellent. Moving like that while accurately shooting at the same time was something only she could do.

“This isn't all I've got!!”

”Hey, don't get too full of yourself, that's dangerous!”

Eventually, Theia's and Koutarou's movements started to fall out of synch. By doing that, Theia created openings to attack and back up Yurika. But at the same time, it increased the risk that the enemy might be able to hit her. This caused Koutarou to worry.

“You only feel like it's dangerous because you can only see spiritual energy! Regardless of their intentions to attack, they can't attack at tactically impossible timings!”

However, Koutarou's worry was for naught. Theia's announcement came from the fact that her battle sensor had analyzed the giants' attack pattern,

and she accurately avoided the attacks while going on a counteroffensive. Koutarou had nothing he could say as a comeback.

“... As you wish, My Princess”

Koutarou gave up on objecting and continued to avoid attacks so he could be used as a reference for Theia. Satisfied with that, the edges of Theia's lips lifted up into a smile.

“Fufu, that's more like it, my knight”

With Theia starting to attack back, the giants attack became less frequent. Thanks to that, Koutarou and Theia stopped wasting time with dodging and gained a few hundred meters in a short amount of time.

“Are you okay, Yurika!?”

Koutarou landed down on the ground and slid across it for a while using his posture control booster to end up in front of Yurika to protect her.

“You did good, Yurika!”

Theia's voice came through Yurika's bracelet. She had stayed in the air to make full use of the mobility of her Combat Dress.

“S-Satomi-san! Theia-chan!”

Theia's attacks had benefited Yurika as well. Having taken an attack, the giants had no choice but to attack Koutarou and Theia as well. Thanks to that, the attacks on Yurika eased up, and Yurika was able to come back from a dangerous spot.

“I'm okay, somehow! But I am so glad you came, I was almost at my limit...”

Yurika had injuries all over. Not only had she used up a lot of magical power with her teleport, but she had also continuously protected the retreating soldiers from the attacks of six giants. She had wounds all over her body and her exhaustion made her steps sway.

“It's okay now. Just leave the rest to me and Theia... is what I would like to say, but there's something you have to do too”

“The virus weapon?”

”That's right! You enter the trailer and find the weapon while we are dealing

with the giants!”

Thanks to Yurika's efforts, the soldiers had safely escaped. With no need to protect them any more, Koutarou and Theia should be able to handle the six giants. While the two were fighting, Yurika could move over to their main objective, to found the virus weapon. Looking at Yurika's state, this was the most effective way to split up their roles.

“Okay, please start right away!”

Yurika nodded powerfully and her tired body readied her cane again. She would now need to break through the openings that Koutarou and Theia will open and get past the giants.

“Here I come!”

The first to move was, as expected, Theia. She fired several heat smoke grenades into the area surrounding the giants from the cannons above her shoulders. That caused high temperature smoke to wrap around the giants and deprive them of their vision. With the high temperature, the heat sensors wouldn't work. That was more than enough to conceal a person.

“Here we go, Yurika!”

”Yes!”

Koutarou took the lead and began running. As his armor was starting up its jamming, the giants couldn't tell that Koutarou was approaching.

One in the center, three to the right and two to the left. So the best would be to pass through the left side of the middle one...

As the giants were mobile weapons with pilots inside, their auras could be seen through the smoke. The loud operating sounds and footsteps also let him know of their position.

“This should be enough of a handicap!”

As Koutarou passed through the gaps of two giants, he cut the giants legs. Since the giants themselves had no aura, he couldn't accurately tell their precise location, and couldn't cause a lot of damage. However, the two giants ended up having to drag their legs.

“No, this is what you call a handicap!!”

The sound data of the giants approaching taken by Koutarou's armor was shared with Theia who was flying in the air. Her Combat Dress' fire control system analyzed that data to create holographic models and projected them into Theia's vision. Now she too could see the giants.

Using that data for reference, Theia fired cannon shell after cannon shell. She aimed for places where the pilots sitting in the center of the giants wouldn't get hit. As a result, shells rained down on the shoulders and arms.

“Alright, we're past!”

“We did it!!”

While the giants were being stalled by Theia's bombardment, Koutarou and Yurika safely made it past them. Fortunately, they weren't attacked by the giants, and their defensive spell and barrier protected them from the heat of the smoke.

“Go, Yurika! Don't worry about your back, I'll protect you!”

Koutarou stopped after getting past the giants, while Yurika continued running. They each had different roles in this.

“Yes!!”

Yurika ran at full speed as she was told. Her role was to enter the trailer and find the virus weapon. Koutarou's and Theia's roles were to stall the giants here. Each of them fulfilling their roles was the condition for victory.

“... It's our turn now, Theia”

“No, it's my turn. You're only helping”

”So you really are angry”

”Of course!! Who wouldn't when your citizens and country is threatened by a virus!!”

”I agree. As if I'd let Bandarion get his way!”

Yurika was convinced that she wouldn't get attacked from behind. Because behind her was Forthorthe's strongest princess and the legendary knight that had been revived after an eternity. That's why Yurika didn't show any concern whatsoever to her back.

Part 11

When the smoke cleared, what greeted the pilots of the giants was a golden flag in the sky, drawn by lasers. The crest on that flag was a gorgeous and beautiful flower in full bloom. The pilots knew very well who that flag represented.

“It's Princess Theiamillis...”

“So the rumors of her going to the front on her own were true...”

The royal families had protected Forthorthe for over 2,000 years. So the meaning behind one of their combat flags being raised was deep. It meant surrender or lose, and the eyes of the golden haired girl, who had created the flag, were saying the same thing.

“C-Calm down! Even if the royal family is undefeated, Her Majesty Elfaria has committed crimes and will have her royal rights stripped! It's not like we're facing real royalty!”

The squad captain called out to his subordinates over the communicator and gave them words of encouragement. It was clear that he himself didn't believe in them. His voice was trembling, and he was still referring to Elfaria as Her Majesty. He was simply repeating his façade, and couldn't even fool himself.

“Besides, the battle has already begun! It's too late to beg for forgiveness now!”

But even then, the squad captain pointed his large beam shotgun towards Princess Theiamillis. However, that was not because of courage, but because he had already attacked royalty and he was now feeling cornered. The pilots didn't have to option to surrender.

“Follow the captain! Before we're all killed!”

”UooooOoooo!!”

The five subordinates followed after their advancing captain. They all knew that the girl before them was not just lovely, but a natural born beast. If they stood by idly, they would be devoured.

“... Even raising my flag only bought a few seconds, huh”

Princess Theiamillis readied her weapons with a fearless smile. Despite facing six giants, her confidence remained unwavering, in contrast to the pilots in the giants.

“Yurika got inside the trailer, that's more than enough, right?”

The knight guarding the princess readied a sword in each hand. He was wearing a powered armor, but it couldn't compete with the giants. Normally, they weren't opponents that should be feared, but the appearance of Princess Theiamillis, and the coloring of the knight's armor made the pilots feel a vague anxiety. The next moment, that anxiety became reality.

“Go, Koutarou!”

”As you wish, My Princess!”

The knight charged as he got backup by the princess. The missiles fired by the princess kicked up a cloud of dirt, and the knight pushed through the cloud and his dazzling sword approached. To counter that, the squad captain leading his charge pointed his beam shotgun at the knight. He was planning on shooting the knight point blank when the sword was repelled by the barrier.

“I-Impossible!?”

However, betraying the squad captain's expectations, the knight's right sword easily cut through the barrier. As there was a vast difference in the output from the generators that the armor and the giant had, this was an impossible outcome. Next up, the knight swung his left sword, opening a wide tear in the giant's thick armor.

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaa, don't come any closer!!”

Thrown into a panic by these attacks, the squad captain simply fired his beam shotgun off repeatedly. Yet the knight easily dodged the scattered beams fired from the shotgun.

“I can't hit!! I can't hit him!!”

As the shotgun fired scattered beams, it should be able to hit even fast moving targets. Despite that, the knight didn't get hit. This was in part to the knight reading ahead and dodging, but also because he was at such close

range that his sword could reach, so the beams didn't have enough time to scatter.

“C-Captain!?”

”Don't just stand there and look, you fire too!”

”Understood!”

Seeing the captain struggling to hit the knight, the other giants fired as one. But the knight being too close to their ally, only few shots hit the knight. As they were firing scattered beams, only having a few hit wouldn't cause that much damage, and the barrier from the knight's armor blocked them all.

“They seem to be in a fluster”

“There's six of them, so if they used them well they could defeat us...”

Of course, the knight didn't continue to just take the attacks. In the brief stops between his dodges he teamed up with the princess to attack the giants weak spots, their legs. Because of that, the giants became visibly slower.

“It's not like there are six of Elexis. And they're seeing us for the first time”

”So they're dealing with unfamiliar enemies while unable to make full use of their units, huh”

While things were becoming one-sided, it wasn't that the giants were weak. Nor was the knight and princess too strong. The problem was that they were fighting against unknown enemies in crafts they hadn't mastered, and worst of all, they felt immense pressure from fight against royalty.

“Hey, Theia, I said don't get reckless!”

”It's okay. This way—”

The princess who was supporting the knight from the rear was all of a sudden really close. She pointed the large piledriver attached to her left arm at the giant right in front of her.

“— they'll panic even more!”

The hammerhead sent flying by a loud explosion easily blew off the giant's head. With the head blown off, the pilot inside of the giant could see the

princess with his very own eyes.

That's Her Highness, that's without a doubt Princess Theiamillis...!

Bathed in sunlight, the sight of Princess Theiamillis, equipped with a piledriver that was spewing out steam, evoked a somewhat divine feeling. She soon activated her boosters and vanished, but the pilot that had seen her was overcome with a sense that there was no way they could win, and began feeling regret.

“Uwaaaaaaa!! Uwaa-aaaaaaaaahhhh!!”

Eventually that confusion and regret spread through the entire squad. With that, both the offense and defence of the giants greatly fell, and the knight and princess gained the upper hand. While the princess had been a reckless, the overall outcome was in fact safer. The pilots had been completely overwhelmed.

Part 12

Just after Koutarou’s and Theia’s battle against the giants had begun, Yurika successfully entered the trailer’s cargo compartment from the hatch at the rear. The insides of the cargo compartment of a trailer in Forthorthe was at least three times larger in every dimension than when compared to that of one from Earth.

“... The virus’ containment vessel... the containment vessel...”

Yurika began exploring the cargo compartment. Immediately after entering were six metal fixtures where Yurika believed that the giants had been lying down. Believing that entering and leaving the trailer from that position would be more convenient, Yurika headed deeper into the cargo compartment.

“... This probably isn’t it... it should be something more sturdy... besides, it doesn’t have any ‘Danger!’ markings...”

Several large boxes were lined up deeper inside the cargo compartment. However, none of them looked to be that sturdy. Not even Yurika, with her lack of knowledge, believed that a virus would be kept in a wooden or

plastic container. She peeked inside of them just in case, but as expected they were just food or other general merchandise, in other words, normal supplies.

“Ah, t-this is!?”

However, as Yurika was looking through the boxes of supplies, she discovered a large white box that had almost been hidden by the other boxes. The overall appearance of that box was completely different from the other boxes. It was made completely out of metal, and sounds of machinery came from it. It also had several red and yellow marks that really stuck out.

“This is it! It has to be this box!”

The marks on the box looked familiar to Yurika. It was a Forthorthe warning mark, and she had come across several times inside of Theia’s Blue Knight. It was the kind of ‘Danger!’ mark that she was looking for.

“I should open it up... right after, just in case...”

Yurika pointed the tip of her cane at the box. She didn’t know what was going on inside of the box, so she was going to use a spell to find out.

“Clairvoyance!”

Yurika cast a spell to let her see through things. That allowed her vision to pierce the thick box and see what lay within.

“Could this black stuff be the virus weapon!?”

Inside the box was a metallic pedestal, and affixed to it was a cylindrical, transparent case. The pedestal looked sturdy and some shaking or impacts wouldn’t make the case fall. In fact, the case still looked unharmed, and within it was a black liquid, and for each step a giant on the outside took, the liquid shook. From the way it moved, it looked like it was very stick.

“It looks muddled and yucky... but, I should be able to open the box. I don’t have any time so I have to be bold!”

After looking inside the box and confirming that it was safe, Yurika put her hand on the grip attached to the box and pulled it down.

The side with the grip attached served as the boxes door, and the hinges on the side creaked a little as it opened. As the door opened, large amounts

of cold air came spewing out. The mechanical sounds were to create this cold air. The box functioned as a refrigerator.

“... There’s no doubt, this is it...”

Yurika felt something very ominous when she saw the black liquid within the case with her own eyes, instead of using magic. That made her sense that this was definitely the virus weapon.

“T-That’s right, I have to— eh, huh?”

Just when Yurika was about to activate her communications device to report that she had found the virus weapon, she noticed something strange attached to the cylindrical case containing it. It was a metallic box, and on the surface were characters being displayed. Those characters changed as time passed.

“What is this...”

Perplexed, Yurika pushed her bracelet closer to the case and activated the translation device instead of the communications device. A weak laser fired out from the bracelet, and read the characters on the surface of the box, rewriting them into characters she could understand.

“59, 58, 57, 56... some kind of numbers?”

What was being displayed on the surface of the box was numbers counting down. Not understanding what that meant, Yurika tilted her head in confusion. However, the shape of the box made her associate it with a certain thing. This certain thing would sometimes appear in the anime and manga she looked at.

“T-This couldn’t be... could it!?”

Yurika felt like this association was correct. And if it really was, things would be really bad. That’s why this time she did activate her communications device, and purposefully chose not to encrypt her message as she sent it over all frequencies.

“I found the virus weapon!! But there’s a bomb attached to it!! It will explode in less than a minute!!”

The displayed numbers were a countdown.

The small box was a bomb.

The virus weapon packed into the trailer had been set up to explode and spread once the time was right.

Part 13

Bandarion had schemed to use the virus weapon to corner the Elfaria faction. However, the utmost care was necessary. If the virus wasn't spread at the correct place at the correct time, Bandarion would be the one who would be cornered.

The first question was if the Elfaria faction would show up to blow up the containment vessel. That problem was resolved with a fake Elfaria faction squad. If the fake squad destroyed the trailer, the virus would definitely be spread.

However, that alone wasn't enough for Bandarion, and he prepared another safety precaution. His worries weren't just the one point above. If the information that the trailer was transporting a virus leaked, the Elfaria faction might try to stop it. Depending on the circumstances, the fake squad might be defeated. And even if information wasn't leaked, the fake squad might be detected. In other to resolve those kinds of problems, a bomb was set on the virus' containment vessel.

The bomb had a very elaborate make, and based on the situation, two different types of explosions were possible. The first was a small explosion intended to spread the virus. The other was a large explosion to destroy all evidence in the case that the virus weapon was taken away. The latter half didn't guarantee that the virus would be completely destroyed, but the evidence of the virus being transported would be destroyed.

The countdown was currently working its way down for the former explosion. It would be made to look like Koutarou's and the others' attack had destroyed the containment vessel. Even if some were to see the explosion, they would soon die from the virus. With the Elfaria faction having an inferior force, they wouldn't be able to secure the area after the

virus had been spread, allowing Bandarion's side to cover up the evidence at their leisure.

Part 14

Hearing Yurika's report, Theia quickly fired off a flare and shouted into her communications device.

"Everyone hearing this message, regardless of side are to withdraw immediately! Get as far away from the trailer as you can! If possible, head in the direction of the wind!"

The communications device delivered Theia's words across all frequency bands. The flare and her words shared the same meaning. With a bomb attached to the virus, there was no longer any more time to fight. The Elfaria faction obeyed Theia and began an immediate retreat. However, as expected, the imperial army on Bandarion's side didn't move.

"A virus weapon!?"

"And a time bomb!?"

"W-What do we do, captain!"

They had heard Yurika's and Theia's words as well. However, they couldn't just believe them right away. The fake squad in the forest had been told that the Elfaria faction were carrying mobile weapons on the trailer. The giants on the trailer were only being moved to the front lines. Neither of them ever imagined a virus weapon being transported on the trailer. They knew they had to escape right away if Theia and Yurika were speaking the truth. However, if it was a lie to confuse them, and they believed it, they would be responsible for a massive blunder. They would receive an intense scolding and punishment. The imperial army couldn't move.

"Driver, can you hear me!?"

The only one calm was the captain of the six giants. He quickly activated his communications device and called for the trailer's driver.

“Y-Yes!”

“Confirm it with the cameras of the cargo compartment!! Can you see something like it!?”

“Wait a moment… I can see it! A refrigerated container with warning markings over it, with its door open and a girl looking inside!”

The camera feed was sent to the giants’ cockpits. On it they could see a girl, Yurika, staring into an open container.

“Damnit!”

The squad captain pulled on his emergency lever to blow away the cockpit’s hatch, and hurriedly jumped out of his unit, before running towards the trailer without a weapon in hand.

“Captain, where are you going!?”

“You guys fall back! I will confirm the truth!”

The captain’s actions were due to his sense of duty. Theia’s and Yurika’s words were most likely the truth, but he couldn’t just withdraw like that without any evidence. He needed to confirm the existence of both the virus weapon and the bomb.

“Understood, Captain!”

“Send out the retreat signal! And use all frequency bands to keep civilians and allies from approaching!”

The squad of giants broke off from combat and began retreating in an orderly fashion. The units that had taken a lot of damage were abandoned and only the pilot transferred over to an ally unit. From their appearance it seemed clear that they were seriously retreating.

“Theia, we’re going too!”

“Yurika, wait there! We’ll come to you!”

With the imperial army retreating, Koutarou and Theia could move freely. The two turned their backs on the giants and headed towards the trailer’s cargo compartment. As the two reached the hatch, Yurika appeared from inside. She was carrying the containment vessel, but her steps were

wavering due to its weight.

“Miss, give that over here!”

“T-Thank you very much!”

Noticing that Yurika was having trouble, the squad captain received the containment vessel from her. Upon receiving it, his expression turned grim.

A case containing something virus-like, with a bomb attached to it... they were correct!! Which means that we were just some sacrificial pawns from the very beginning!!

While it wasn’t certain if it was a real virus or not. However, with it being placed within the trailer it was clear that Theia and Yurika weren’t lying. Thanks to that, the captain lost all intentions of fighting. Being treated as a sacrifical pawn, he was deprived of his will to fight. Instead, anger at the upper brass of the military flared up.

“How does it look!?”

“Your Highness, there’s only 30 seconds left on the countdown!”

The captain obediently reported to Theia, as if he was an Elfaria faction soldier. The anger he felt towards the military was what drove him to do so.

“Can’t you defuse it!?”

“There’s no time for that! If we had found it five minutes earlier...”

The bomb attached to the containment vessel wasn’t anything special. With enough time, even the captain could defuse it. However, 30 seconds was not enough time. Defusing it was impossible.

“Can’t we just remove the bomb and throw it away?”

“If we try to force it off, it will explode! It will only speed up the time we have left before it explodes”

“Which means we only have one option”

Listening to the discussion, Koutarou opened the front of his armor and quickly stepped out.

“What are you going to do, Koutarou!?”

“Let’s gather all explosives we can find to make the explosion bigger. We’ll burn up the virus with that”

“... I see, it’ll be a wager, but that’s all we can do in this situation”

Koutarou’s idea was to burn up the virus. If they just waited for the bomb to go off, they’d be facing a disaster. If they didn’t have the time to defuse it or throw it into space, the only option they had was to make the explosion as big as possible to incinerate the virus. By exploding the armor’s generator and having the ammunition explode as well would rise the temperature at the time of explosion. But even doing all of that, there was no guarantee that the virus would be completely burned up. It was a wager with very poor odds.

“Then let’s—”

“... Please wait. I’ll do something about it!”

However, as they were about to execute their plan, Yurika stopped Koutarou and the others. A strong determination resided within her eyes. Having been cornered, she had returned to her magical girl self.

“Can you do it, Yurika!?”

”There’s no guarantee, but I think it will be better than just making the explosion bigger!”

”Then we’ll leave it to you! Show us what you can do, Yurika!”

Upon looking at Yurika, Theia made her decision right away. She could entrust it to Yurika the way she was. Theia knew that very well.

“Yes!”

Yurika nodded firmly and held her cane in both hands. There was little time left. She had to start right away.

“Everyone, just in case, get around be and put up your barriers. Even if I fail, that might still work”

There was a mere ten seconds left. There would be no do-overs. This was their first and final move. However, Yurika wasn’t losing her nerve. With eyes and voice full of determination, she began her incantation.

“Perfect Force Field – Modifier – Maximize”

For some reason, Yurika was casting a defensive spell. Moreover, she poured all of her remaining magical power into it. What was even more perplexing was that the spell was cast on the containment vessel that had been left on the ground.

“You’re planning to contain the explosion with that spell!? But even then—”

“No! The real battle starts here!”

Yurika interrupted Theia and brandished her cane.

“Field – Close!!”

Yurika’s spell wasn’t over yet. The defensive spell Yurika had cast created a globe stretched over ten meters in diameter with the containment vessel at the center. With Yurika’s follow-up incantation, that field began shrinking. Ten meters turned to eight, eventually reaching six. It’s size rapidly began shrinking.

“Yurika, it’s exploding!”

”Gooooooooo!!”

The bomb attached to the containment vessel exploded as Yurika’s defensive spell reached a diameter of two meters. The explosion occurred within that small space, and it glowed like a small sun. Even then, Yurika didn’t stop shrinking her field, and its diameter was reduced even more.

“I see, Yurika, so that’s what you were thinking!!”

That was where realized what Yurika was doing. First off, Yurika created a large globe-shaped defensive spell, and closed in a large amount of air. Next she compressed the air as much as she could, and the globe was now less than 1 meter in diameter. The explosion occurred in that small space. The scale of the explosion was far from large, but due to the compression, the pressure and temperature greatly increased. In other words, Yurika made use of the compression and the explosion to create situation like the nightmare she had experienced during the re-entry into the atmosphere.

“Naaaaaaaah, Aaaaaah, Waaaaaaah!!”

Of course, that put a great deal of strain on the defensive spell, and the load on Yurika drastically increased. In fact, the defensive spell covering the compressed air was blinking and looked like it would disappear at any moment.

“Signaltin, give Yurika your power!!”

The one to save Yurika from the danger was Koutarou. He pulled out Signaltin’s vast magical power and poured it into Yurika. The moment Signaltin’s white magical power touched Yurika, it turned yellow and the light of the defensive spell increased.

“How about thiiiiisss!!”

While borrowing Koutarou’s help, Yurika mustered the last of her powers to compress the space even further. The space had now been compressed into a spherical space just a few centimeters in diameter. With the fragments of the containment vessel still inside, the actual available space was even less. In that tiny amount of space was enough area to fill a globe ten meters in diameter, and the explosive force of an explosion. With that, the pressure and temperature generated inside had far exceeded that of an atmospheric re-entry, for just a short amount of time. And in that harsh, hellish environment, there was no way for the virus to survive.

By the time it was all over, Yurika had lost consciousness while stilling gripping onto her cane. She had given it her all until the very end, and literally run out of strength. The reason why she hadn't let go of her cane despite that was surely because she was a magical girl of love and courage.

"... You did good, Yurika"

Koutarou held up Yurika and put her on his back. When Koutarou held onto her, all tension left Yurika's body and she simply leaned over his back. Even though she was unconscious, she looked surprisingly a lot like she usually did when she was lazily lying around.

"It looks like the virus was completely incinerated... Well done, Yurika"

In the direction Yurika's cane was pointed was nothing but ash and a melted containment vessel. Regardless of what was inside, it had all been burnt up. That much was clear to anyone.

"Make sure you thank her properly when she wakes up"

"I know. Don't lump me in with you"

The atmosphere between Koutarou and Theia eased up quite a bit. They had only just escaped a deadly situation, so it was only to be expected. The captain who was with them felt the same, and he was lying down with his limbs stretched out a bit further away from the others.

"... Phew, looks like it all ended safely"

That was when a voice came from above Koutarou.

"Elexis, huh"

When he looked up, he saw Elexis, Maya and six magical girls. With Elexis at the lead, they landed one after another in front of Koutarou and the others. They looked tired, but all eight were safe.

"Now then, Koutarou-kun, I believe we have a mutual problem"

"I know. Whether to settle things with us or not, right?"

With the Bandarion's virus weapon incident settled, Koutarou's and Elexis' groups would return to their normal relationship. That relationship being

enemies, and if they faced one another they had to fight.

“Honestly, us fighting here wouldn’t be good. There’s too many eyes on us”

Elexis shrugged as he spoke in an easygoing manner. The captain was still plopped down a bit off, and Bandarion most likely had some intentionally placed journalists recording them. Moreover, the army likely had some satellites pointed at them. If they were to carelessly fight here, Bandarion would find out that Elexis was involved, and their position would worsen. As Signaltin couldn't dispel their disguises, it was a deadly weapon to them right now.

“... And we have fewer numbers”

The problem for Koutarou and the others were simply that they lacked forces. With Yurika unconscious, it would be a two vs eight.If they fought, Koutarou and Theia would certainly lose. While they might be able to take two down with them each, that was their limit.

“So as a proposal... why don’t we just get along for today? To avoid ruining each others’ future”

Elexis suggested that they avoided fighting. Both of them had reasons to not fight. If they got stubborn and fought anyways, the future for both sides would be ruined. It would be a meaningless fight for both sides.

“What do we do, Theia?”

”Hmm...”

Hearing Elexis’ proposal, wrinkles appeared on Theia’s forehead. With her personality, she didn’t like avoiding a fight. She believed that royalty should break through the front.

“Princess, you should decide to get along with us fast. Crim-chan is just oozing to get into a fight”

“How rude, I can think about the future too”

However, Orange’s and Crimson’s words made Theia calm down. Fighting was easy, but thinking about the future, in other words, the country and its citizens, fighting here was foolish. Even the legendary Princess Alaia threw away her pride for the sake of her country and its people, and had tried to stop the fighting.

“I got it. I’ll accept those conditions”

”Thank you, Your Highness”

Maya flashed a smile full of meaning. If she were to be honest, she wanted to fight. But she had accepted it. Her wish to let the people of Folsaria return to Forthorthe was similar to Theia’s feelings. The meaning behind Maya’s smile was very similar to something like sympathy for Theia.

“But tomorrow, we’ll be back to enemies. We’ll definitely defeat you!”

“Just the way we want it. And we will definitely win”

Theia and Maya had fearless smiles as they stared at each other. The two felt the same way even here. Elexis who looked at the two let out chuckle and whispered to Koutarou.

“... It looks like we’re both having a hard time thanks to women”

“... Looks like it”

Elexis was without a doubt an enemy, they usually never saw eye to eye on something, and had been through a lot thanks to one another. However, Koutarou forgot that and nodded. He truly felt that way thanks to having overcome a danger so great he forgot about fighting for a while.

“I can hear you! You insubordinate fool!”

“El!! What is that supposed to mean!?”

They both had sharp ears, and they got angry the same way. Koutarou and Elexis looked at each other and smiled wryly, before slumping their shoulders and sighing at the same time.

The Silver Sword

Part 1

Wednesday, November 24

When first hearing the report from Granado, Bandarion didn't believe what he was hearing at first. That was just how confident he was in his plan.

"Is that true, Granado!? Was the spreading of the virus really prevented!?"

"There's no doubting it. Princess Theiamillis herself took control of the situation, and the virus was disposed before it had a chance to spread"

"To think she could see through all of that… curse it!"

Unable to hide his irritation, Bandarion slammed his large fist into his sofa's armrest. The sofa used high quality wood and was well made, but it creaked under the force behind his fist. That was just how much frustration was behind his blow.

"Get to investigating where the information leak came from right away!"

"I have already instructed an investigation to begin. But Bandarion-sama, there is an even greater problem"

"What!?"

Bandarion was in a bad mood, and his tone of voice aggressive. However, Granado who had known him for a long time remained unfazed and calmly operated the panel nearby. Granado knew that Bandarion's anger was not directed at him.

"Please take a look at this"

Bandarion and Granado were in Bandarion's private room. It was filled with luxurious furniture and it was the room where Bandarion spent his private

time. However, the room was often used for secret talks as well, and a computer that allowed for the creation of a large hologram had been installed. The computer turned some specific video in holograms.

“This is...”

“This is footage from news that was broadcast recently. Intentionally staging the incident nearby journalists backfired on us. The battle on Alaia was reported on in real time”

Appearing on the hologram was Princess Theiamillis and a knight in blue armor serving as her guard, and they were fighting against giant humanoid mobile weapons. The teamwork between the two was perfect, and despite the numerical disadvantage of a six vs two fight, they gradually cornered the giants. It was the sight of a princess and her knight that the people would love.

The ones that recorded the video was a news organization that had been there for an unrelated interview and were being escorted by the Elfaria faction. The Elfaria faction would fall into a trap, and the media under their protection would capture all of it. By doing that, the report would have increased credibility, and should help corner the Elfaria faction, it could even help change the media’s stance. That was the original plan.

However, the trap that had so many precautions had been seen through, and what was broadcast ended up benefitting the Elfaria faction. The video of the princess’ and her knight’s outstanding performance was broadcasted, what’s more was that rumors that the Bandarion side were planning on using a virus weapon starting arising. The news organization that had noticed the fighting attentively listened to all communications, and even though there was jamming in place, they would partially pick up Yurika’s and Theia’s warnings.

As a result, a lot of things backfired. There was of course the miscalculation with the news organization, but the explosion of the virus weapon had been prevented, and it was safe to assume that evidence such as recordings and remains of the explosive device had fallen into the Elfaria faction’s hands. The public opinion would likely sway from this. Depending on the circumstances, the aggressive strategies made possible by the backing of the public might be impossible in the future. The entire thing could only be called a big blunder.

My worrying of that kid’s rise to power was what caused this failure, huh...

Damnit!!

Bandarion was aware of the reason for this failure. Sensing danger as Elexis distinguished himself, Bandarion forcibly tried to change the situation. As a result, he had to pay a steep price.

“... Reckless pride will sweep the rug from out under my feet, huh”

“This time problems appeared from fundamental places”

“So even if it wasn’t for my pride, information would leak and the results would be the same, is it... You sure are calm, Granado”

“In that sense, failing here might have been good timing. This failure can still be recovered from”

The public opinion might change, but they were still overwhelming them in terms of forces. There was also the fact that Elfaria was still running from the trial. While it was an incredibly large blunder, it wasn’t a fatal mistake. Like Granado said, they could still recover.

“Let’s recover from this situation immediately. We’ll stick to fair play for now”

“I believe that is for the best. Our openings will become smaller with that as well”

Satisfied that Bandarion had regained his cool, Granado nodded. Granado was a man who rarely showed emotion, but he was clearly satisfied now. In other words, he placed special importance on that part. Sensing that, Bandarion showed a smile, something he rarely ever showed others.

“... Granado, I’m glad that you’re with me”

”Your words are wasted on me”

”I’d like you to share some of that ice cold calmness of yours”

”However, I don’t have willpower like flame as you do, Bandarion-sama. In that case, it was only destiny that we would combine our powers of fire and ice”

”Well said! If that is destiny, then domination of the country will surely be accomplished!”

Bandarion’s calm had temporarily vanished, and he had lost sight of

himself. However, he had a trusted comrade and old friend in Granado, which allowed him to regain his cool. Unless the cooperation of these two was destroyed, Elfaria and Theia would be far from victory.

Part 2

On the night after the fight had concluded, Yurika, Koutarou and Theia safely reunited with their friends. The location was a base in Pardomshiha territory. Koutarou and the others weren't the only ones that had come there, as captured imperial army soldiers had been taken to the location as well. Upon hearing the circumstances from the soldiers, the whole content of Bandarion's trap became clear.

The soldiers on the trailer had only been told that they were transporting giant mobile weapons to the frontlines, and the metallic box that contained the virus weapon had been explained away as chemicals intended for maintenance. That's why when they were attacked, they simply believed the Elfaria faction was attacking and went on a counteroffensive using the giants. The thought of protecting the trailer never occurred to them. They were sacrificial pawns that didn't know the truth.

The fake Elfaria faction soldiers in the woods had similar circumstances. They had been told that the Elfaria faction was transporting mobile weapons, and they were given the order to disguise themselves and approach the trailer to destroy it. They, of course, hadn't heard anything about a virus in the cargo, nor did they know that soldiers on their own side was within the trailer. If Theia and the others hadn't gotten a hold of the information, they would face a fate worse than sacrificial pawns. They would be framed as Elfaria faction soldiers that had spread a virus weapon, and the virus would kill them. The disguised soldiers had been sent to be framed as Elfaria faction soldiers, using biological weapons for terrorism.

Fortunately, they had been able to escape from Bandarion's conspiracy. Their testimonies and the large amount of evidence would prove the existence of Bandarion's conspiracy. Elfaria would use this conspiracy as a weapon in her showdown against Bandarion.

"Curse you, Bandarion!! To think you'd use such a cruel plan... what do you

take the lives of your allies and citizens for!? Is that something a human would do!?”

Upon hearing the report and fully understanding the situation, Theia was enraged. Her loud voice echoed through the command room, and Koutarou and the others sitting with her all opened their eyes wide.

“Calm down, Theia! They say the one that gets mad loses!”

”I won’t lose!! As if I would ever lose!! I would never hand over Forthorthe and its citizens to a heartless man like that!!”

Unlike Elfaria who was angry, but remained Calm, her daughter Theia was erupting with rage. She couldn’t stand Bandarion using the lives of others as pawns in a game. He wanted to trample everything Theia and the rest of the royal families had desperately protected, the lives of the citizens. Because of that, Theia completely lost sight of herself, and not even the words of her friends could reach her.

“Theia-chan really is a princess, isn’t she... Did you feel the same way inside too, Kiriha-san?”

“Well, my heart was certainly not calm when my hometown turned into a battlefield, and many lives of the People of the Earth were lost. That’s why I understand how Theia-dono feels”

“Me too. Alaia-sama felt the same way when she stood up. Her expressions were a little more calm though...”

While the girls of room 106 might sympathize with Theia’s feelings, they were unable to call out. Being from a different country on a different planet, they couldn’t find the right words. The difference in thinking of history, culture and political structure had reduced them to only being able to speak with simple sympathy. It became a difficult problem because they were considerate of her.

“Clan-san, you sure are calm, aren’t you? Is that a difference in personality?”

While everyone was struggling to say something, Maki could think of a single person who might be able to call out to Theia. That was Clan, another princess just like Theia. However Clan blushed with embarrassment when Maki turned to her.

“Our personalities are different, but in my case, uhm... a year and a little more ago, I was… what I mean was that I feel more regret, or shame, than anger...”

“I understand how you feel. I feel the same way about Darkness Rainbow”

In Clan’s case, she had been on the conspiracy side of things in the past. That’s why upon seeing Bandarion’s evil deeds, she felt anger, but she was also made to look at what she had objectively done herself and reflection and regret accompanied her anger. In order to call out to Theia, she needed to shelve her own past, which made her words more palpable. Having formerly been in Darkness Rainbow, Maki felt the same way.

“Then it’s Satomi-kun’s time to shine”

“Eh, me?”

“You’re the only one related to 2,000 years ago and now, right?”

Shizuka believed that Koutarou was the only one whose words wouldn’t just be simple sympathy. In the past he had saved Forthorthe alongside Alaia, and he had now risen up against another national crisis. At the same time he was an example of how Forthorthians lived. Shizuka concluded that if Koutarou couldn’t do it, nobody else could.

“Landlord-san, I’m not that great of a person. Besides, I’m an Earthling”

“Shut up! Get going!”

“Uwah!?”

Shizuka refused to listen to Koutarou’s rebuttal and forcibly pushed him forwards. Using the precise use of force made possible thanks to her martial arts training, Koutarou stopped right before Theia.

“You feel the same way, don’t you Koutarou!!”

”Ah, um...”

As Koutarou appeared before her, Theia sought after his agreement. However, having not listened for a moment, Koutarou was unable to answer. When he did, Theia’s anger turned towards him.

“What, you don’t!?”

“Calm down first, okay?”

“If you’re a knight, why won’t you say that you’ll defeat Bandarion!! Don’t you have any pride!?

“Now, now...”

“You fool!!”

Up until now, Theia’s anger had been directed at Bandarion and had nowhere to go. But now, she had obtained Koutarou, a proper place to take her anger out on. Koutarou didn’t know if he could properly persuade Theia or not, but she would likely calm down regardless in a little while. The girls knew that, and they watched the situation unfold with smiles.

Part 3

When confronted with Theia’s intense rage, Koutarou first tried to calm he down. But after a few minutes, he had lost his patience and the two ended up having a screaming match. That eventually turned physical and the two got into a brawl.

At first Lord Pardomshiha tried to stop them. But before he could start, his daughter Ruth stopped him. At first he didn’t know the reason why he had been stopped, but as he looked at the two brawl, he began to understand.

“Dieee! Just dieee! You damned disloyalist!!”

“You crappy princess, I won’t forgive you today!”

”If you think you can do something, then try it!!”

”I’ll beat you up so bad that washboard of yours starts swelling up!!”

”Now you’ve said it, you hack knight! You don’t even know my chest has developed!”

Despite the intense screaming and attacking, there were no critical words of attacks unleashed. Before she knew it, Theia’s anger towards Bandarion had disappeared, and she was now single-mindedly throwing her emotions

at Koutarou. After looking at the two for a moment, Lord Pardomshiha reached a certain conclusion.

“... So Her Highness Theiamillis is your rival in love. You’ve got a strong opponent, Ruth”

Neither of them had any intentions of harming the other. Theia was simply depending on Koutarou. That’s why Elfaria and her friends left them be. Besides, someone who was able to get into a fist fight with the princess of a country was definitely special.

“Father... no, Her Highness not an opponent”

Ruth’s eyes opened wide for a moment upon hearing Lord Pardomshiha’s words, but she eventually blushed a little and shook her head.

“That’s awfully confident for you”

Lord Pardomshiha thought that her daughter was confident. He was impressed by her reaction as she was always so serious and slow to mature. However, Ruth smiled wryly and shook her head one more time.

“It’s the opposite. If anything I don’t have any confidence at all”

“What?”

“In order to get him to turn our way, I need to work together with Her Highness”

“Is he that hard to deal with? He certainly doesn’t look like it...”

Ruth said that it was hard for her to get Koutarou to look her way on her own. But upon seeing Koutarou for himself, Lord Pardomshiha believed Koutarou to be a perfectly normal boy. While he might get laughed at for being a doting parent if he were to say it out loud, he couldn’t imagine the boy being able to ignore Ruth’s charm.

“He is more serious than me, firmly keeps to reason, and doesn’t even hesitate to correct someone’s mistakes, even if they’re royalty... he’s like the very model of knights. And because of that, nobody can reach him”

Deep trust and love could be seen in Ruth’s eyes when she spoke of Koutarou. Lord Pardomshiha believed it was only natural for him to be serious if Ruth had fallen for him. However, he objected to him being

unreachable.

“At that age, he looks like he’d easily bend over from some sex appeal...”

“It’s impossible”

Ruth adamantly shook her head. If he was someone that could be moved by something like that, Ruth wouldn’t have gotten this involved with Koutarou. It was because he didn’t move at all that her feelings for him grew.

“After all... not even the legendary Princess Alaia could stop him on her own”

Not even Princess Alaia, often spoken of as a legend, could get Koutarou to stop being a knight. Ruth didn’t have to confidence to think she could do something that Alaia couldn’t.

“Princess Alaia!? What are you say— Ah!?”

Lord Pardomshiha realized something and hurriedly looked at Koutarou. On his waist were to swords, a golden and a silver one, he saw the crests carved into them, and he saw his shining blue armor. If that wasn’t just his hobby, but something born out of necessity, then...

A shock that shook Lord Pardomshiha’s entire body assaulted him.

“Impossible! Ruth, are you serious!? If that’s the truth, then is that boy!?”

Lord Pardomshiha was starting to understand what Ruth was telling him. Though he couldn’t easily believe it. It was far easier to doubt his daughter's sanity than to accept that as the truth.

“Yes, it’s just as you think”

”W-What!? Then he... is that man—”

“That man is Satomi Koutarou-sama. He wears a beautiful blue armor, wields a dazzling silver sword, has defeated a giant dragon, and saved the country in the middle of a coup d’etat. The legendary knight—”

In contrast to Lord Pardomshiha who was confused, Ruth was extremely calm and spoke clearly of who the man in the middle of a fist fight with Theia was.

“— whom we have called Reios Fatra Bertorion in the past, a man everyone knows of”

Ruth was proud. She had been able to introduce the person she held dear to her father. That’s why she puffed up her chest in a dignified manner and smiled happily.

“— Are you saying that he’s the Blue Knight!?”

However, to Lord Pardomshiha that was a big misfortune. Ruth’s words made him feel like his heart was about to stop.

Using a private route, and the magic of Darkness Rainbow, escaping from the planet of Alaia wasn’t all that difficult. DKI wasn’t a company that was being especially watched. If anything, the guard around them was lessened as they worked together with the army. That’s why Elexis had returned to his company headquarters in Forthorthe, on the afternoon the day after the battle.

“Looking at yourself in the news... haven’t you become quite the star?”

“Maya, you’ve been picking fights a lot since yesterday. Did something you didn’t like happen?”

”Not really. I’m the same as always”

Having returned to his private room in the company HQ, Elexis began staring at his computer immediately after stepping through the door. He was gathering information. He was in particular gathering information on the battle yesterday. There was a lot of things he needed to know, such as how the public opinion was moving, or if their disguise had been seen through and such. He used all kinds of methods, such as reading news on the networks, and buying information from acquainted informants.

“Just do as you please, you don’t have to think about me. I’ll do my own thing too”

Maya sat down on the sofa in the corner of the room and drank alcohol on her own, in a foul mood. Elexis had noticed her bad mood since yesterday, but he didn’t know the reason. But if he was the reason, she would have left the room, so he figured something unpleasant must have happened. That’s why Elexis thought of joining her drinking after he finished what he was doing.

“Now, now, I’ll join you with your drinking, just wait a little more. There’s something that caught my interest”

“Caught your interest?”

As if satisfied with Elexis’ words, or having had her own interest drummed up by his, Maya picked up her bottle and glasses and headed towards Elexis.

“This video”

Elexis moved the hologram so that Maya could see, and replayed it from the start. It was a news broadcast by one of Forthorthe’s networks.

“This is footage of the battle yesterday, isn’t it?”

Maya peeked at the video through the corner of her eyes, as she handed Elexis a glass and began pouring. The alcohol was from Forthorthe and made using fruits growing there, and a mellow smell filled the room.

“That’s right, but this is what I want you to pay attention to”

Elexis drank from his glass with his right hand while using his left hand to operate the panel. As he did, messages appeared as if surrounding the hologram. Information networks in Forthorthe allowed people to put messages directly on parts of the video that stood out.

“What’s this? The boy’s completely buried in characters”

”That’s right. Everyone is paying attention to Koutarou-kun”

As Koutarou appeared, his surroundings was completely covered in characters, and he himself could barely be seen. His armor’s blue color could sometimes be seen through the messages.

“I understand how they feel. Everyone looking at this video would be reminded of the name of a certain individual who appears in our history”

Elexis operated the panel once more and removed the messages. Just then, Koutarou was chasing away the giant mobile weapons. That was when the video returned to the studio, and the news casters, and an explanation of the details regarding the battle began. Since Elexis knew about the details, he stopped the video, and started up a new one.

“And there are a lot of links from that video to this one”

”Oh... this is the boy too. And in private? Where did this come from?”

”Based on the height of the camera and the surroundings, it seems like it’s a child recording”

”And that was leaked for some reason?”

“Something like that, I’d wager. Take a look, you can see a lot of inhuman movements”

A video, most likely filmed by a young child, by the title of ‘The Blue Knight found’ had been uploaded to the information that connected all of Forthorthe some days ago. The video was of one boy, jumping around. On the video was the boy in question moving in amazing ways that one wouldn’t expect from a human.

At first, the video had been considered worthless. As the moves recorded were so far from what humans could do, it was suspected to contain doctored footage. But once the battle on Alaia was broadcast, this video got a lot more attention. The battle had been recorded by several cameras, and showed the fighting prowess of a knight in blue armor. As a result, it was proven that he could actually move like that.

“And this is what’s truly extraordinary”

Unlike the video of the combat on Alaia, where the journalists were far away, the video ‘The Blue Knight found’ was taken up close, and it showed the boy’s expression and more detailed movements. As a result, the video caught the interest of a lot of people. What attracted the attention of people the most was his possession.

“The boy’s... sword?”

“That’s right. This silver sword... I hadn’t really thought about it that much before, but if this sword is ‘that sword, then the situation will become a little complicated”

Thinking it over again, Elexis realized there had been a lot of hints.

A blue armor, the relationship between the boy and the princess, a giant red dragon, the boy knowing that Folsaria consisted of the descendants of Grevanas and his magicians. And most of all, the silver sword being displayed on the hologram. Elexis had experienced the sword’s frightening power first hand.

There was also a lot of circumstantial evidence. They were indirect, but they all pointed to who the boy in question was. But because that was a very bold line of thinking, the rational Elexis had eliminated that possibility from his mind.

“’That sword’?”

“... The treasured sword of the oracle, Signaltin. The sacred treasure that is said to have been lost 2,000 years ago and serves as proof of the royal

authority of Forthorthe”

The boy might be holding the treasured sword, Signaltin. As the crest carved into the sword was that of Alaia’s, many people who saw the video began thinking that way. And Elexis was one of them.

“... Could Koutarou-kun be the descendant of the Blue Knight…? Or could he be...”

If the sword really was Signaltin, even if the boy in blue armor wasn’t the Blue Knight, there was a high chance that he was a descendant. In other words, an individual that could greatly influence the government of Forthorthe had appeared.

Afterword

Long time no see everyone, it's the author Takehaya. This time I have delivered Volume 22. I wonder if you all have 24 (25 if you have the anime bonus) volumes lined up on your bookshelves? As the first volume was released in February of 2009, this volume marks that seven years have passed. Thinking that people who bought the first volume in middle school have already begun their adult life is a strange feeling. As we enter the eighth year with this volume, I will continue to work hard to make sure that everyone can enjoy this series.

Now then, as for the contents of this volume, we follow the events of Koutarou and the others who fell to the planet of Alaia in the previous volume. There are enemies all over on the surface, but they have to escape the encirclement somehow. The story progresses as they come across unexpected encounters and events along the way.

A slight problem this volume is Forthorthe's pet situation. Are there cats and dogs on Forthorthe like there are on Earth? As the humans are almost the exact same, we already know that mammals exist. That only leaves the problem of whether they evolved to become like cats and dogs.

Unlike Theia's worries regarding humans, there is no need for cats and dogs to be exactly the same. They only needed to look roughly the same. For example, a Bulldog and a Shiba dog are the same species, but they look very different. So a difference of that level is acceptable. There's no need for breeding to be possible between them. Compared to Theia's worries, the conditions are looser.

There was no doubt that Earth and Forthorthe had a similar environment. That leaves the only problem of whether or not similar creatures would arise from similar environments. In this regard, there is already an example on Earth. Long ago, separated by continents, there are traces of creatures that evolved on their own, and ended up looking very similar. Mammals and marsupials are like that. While they are on completely different places on the evolutionary tree, there are several creatures that look the same. There might be a form living creatures inevitably assume based on their living conditions.

The conditions on Earth and Forthorthe are similar. As a result, it was likely that similar creatures existed. Of course, there are likely exceptions, but I believe it’s safe to assume that there a creatures that look the same on both planets. So from there, I decided that cats and dogs would exist. There’s a chance they might have a pouch on their stomach for their children, or the color and pattern of their fur might be dramatically different, but as they were selective breed for the sake of pets, they would likely end up looking similar.

That person also appeared again, and once you’ve read this volume I believe you’ve gained a faint understanding of how the overall Forthorthe arc will go down. I believe it might be fun to compare your expectations to how the future volumes happen. Please look forwards to the development in the following volumes.

That’s right, the other day I received several volumes of the Taiwan version. The newest of them was Volume 20. I was surprised to see that they were already at Volume 20, and what surprised me even more was that it came with a drama CD. It used the Japanese voices, but with a translated script. I wondered ’Is that really okay?’, but according to my editor, S-kun, the sub culture following over there mostly understands Japanese. That was a surprise in its own. But it also means there might be some that read the Japanese directly. Hello, everyone from Taiwan. By the way, according to S-kun, the Korean version looks like it's about to overtake the Taiwanese version. So hello everyone from Korea, how is it going?”

Having my work read in different countries is a very rare experience. I’m interested in finding out what they like about this work. I’m sure there’s a lot that’s different in differing countries and cultures. I’m also curious about what character is most popular in the various countries. There might also be differences in how we experience the seasons. It’s an interesting theme, so I wonder if there’s a way to find out. For starters, maybe I should probe S-kun? (lol) I will do my best so that fans from other countries can enjoy this work as well.

There’s one more thing I need to mention in regards to drama CDs. It’s about the bonus drama CD attached to BOOK☆WALKER-san’s digital edition. This was a first of attaching a drama CD to a digital edition, so they didn’t know how many sales they could expect, there was an unease if they could keep do this as part of their business. But fortunately, they far exceeded the ’as long as we can sell this much’ line, and there are talks of continuing to follow this format in the future.

During the end of March as I'm writing this afterword, it's been decided that on the digital edition of this volume, the drama CD that came with the physical volume 18, will be attached. While I can't go into details in this afterword, please visit the official sites of Hobby Japan and BOOK☆WALKER.

Personally, I would be happy if all four drama CDs were delivered. I've heard of a lot that missed buying the special edition of the physical books, so this is an excellent way of get the drama CD's to their hands.

Will this form of offering the drama CD's become more widespread in the future of light novels, and the subculture in its entirety I wonder. I believe spreading using this way will help reduce the local differences. That said, I'm sure there are those who want the CD itself, so the physical version itself would probably not be lost.

Lately one of the things I've been worrying about is that the world is changing too fast and our response is delayed. The best example of that is that we can't listen to the correct proportions of the readers' voices.

The majority of readers of light novels are middle and high students and it gradually reduces until there's only a few percentage reading light novels in their thirties. We know that people really peter out in their late twenties and their thirties from the questionnaires that come with related products. However, we're not able to pick up their voices. There's few who use the reader card that comes with the book, yet most of the voices from the internet are in their twenties.

For example, in connection to net bookshops using credit cards, the users are often past 20 years old. On social networking services or review sites, many conceal their age due to their viewpoint of wanting to protect their personal information. In that case, the age of the users are usually past their twenties. Moreover, as the people who actively read books and put up information about it on the net tend to buy a lot of books, the age groups ends up being higher.

So because of that, while we might be able to hear the voices of the readers from the internet, we can't hear the correct proportions. It is difficult to accurately know at what kind of rate, what each generation has to say.

We believe we have to do something about it, but it's difficult to make something right away. There's discussions on how to pick up the correct

proportions of voices. So in the end, we'll need to rely on reader cards until some measures are taken.

It's ironic to rely on reader cards this highly informationized age, but at present it's our life line. Submitting the reader cards you have at hand won't just help this work, but the entire industry. We can especially learn what introduced the younger audience to light novels. That is something necessary for the continuation of the light novel culture and a very valuable lead. So please cooperate.

That's right, I have one bit of personal information to share. The label for a different publisher I wrote light novels for was ended due to operation issues, so I've gotten quite a lot of free time. Of course, losing a job is not good, so I am working on a new project. If I were to give a generic label to it, it's an adventure story. The main character isn't satisfied with the life provided for them, and leaves their familiar hometown to go on a journey. From a technical standpoint, it will have the same feel as Rokujouma. Starting simple, but revealing that there's a lot of complexity behind it. Because of various adult circumstances, I can't go on for long. I believe I'll be able to announce the details at some point, so please wait a while longer.

With that I've used up all of my pages, so I think I'll wrap it up here this time. Finally I'd like to give my usual thanks to everyone at the editing department who do their best, to Poco-san for the various illustrations, and to the readers who have joined me for eight years.

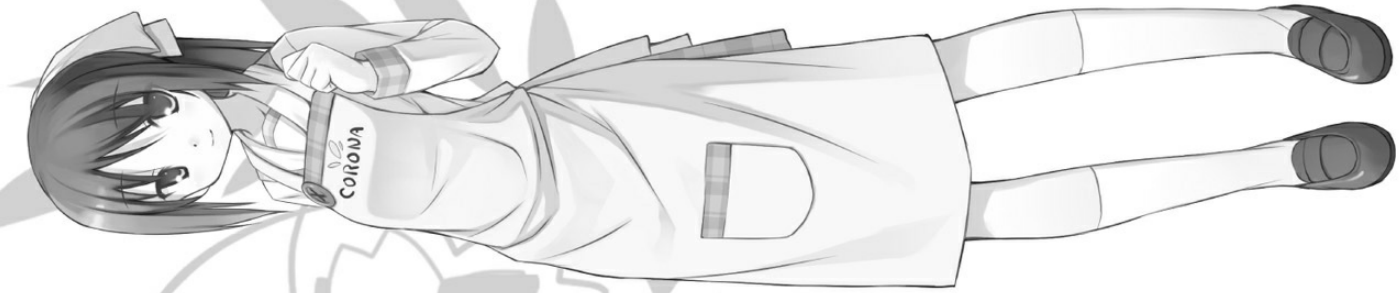
Then let us meet again in the afterword for volume 23.

March, 2016

Takehaya.

Corona Convention

NEW! 2010/11/25



Article 25

Those who have ratified the Corona Convention have an obligation to actively announce Kasagi Shizuka's (Resident of Corona House room 206) real weight.

Rokujouma no Shinryakusha!? - Volume 22

Author: **Takehaya**

Illustrator: **Poco**

Translated by **Warnis**